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Forces spreads its covers this issue to include an original music CD produced, mixed, and “dropped” with the assistance of Barbara McMillen. Also, take note in this edition of the stellar, very original art work of Ellis Rivera, several exceptional pottery pieces, a glance into deaf culture, and a poem that poses the question, “What would I know if I didn’t have the theme to Green Acres memorized?” As always I extend a gracious hand to Dr. Cary A. Israel and the Collin College Board of Trustees for continuing to support one of the longest continuously running literary journals in Texas. Read, listen, savor.

R. Scott Yarbrough
Editor of Forces Literary Magazine

FORCES

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What would I know if I didn't have the theme to *Green Acres* memorized?

Philip Fullman

It's not like I set out to memorize it like
definitions for a biology exam
But somehow
through repeated childhood viewing it
became seared into my memory
In an instant I recall Eva Gabor's character Lisa
get's allergic smelling hay
I can even tell you that Pat Butram who
played good natured flim-flam man Mr. Haney
was also the voice of the Sheriff of Nottingham
in Disney's 1973 version of *Robin Hood*

I don't know how I know this yet
somehow I do
You can't tell me that the portion of my
gray matter that stores this information
couldn't have been put to better use
What does your appendix do and why
do we have one if it can be removed?
What is that divot under the nose called
or a thousand other questions my kid will
ask me that I have to answer with
I don't know or
Google it because
the day we studied that in school Lori Vaughn wore
this really tight blouse and
one of the buttons came undone so
I spent the entire class staring at the right
cup of what had to be at least a D cup bra
But the truth is
even if I hadn't spent my class time going
back and forth between leering and
fantasizing I still wouldn't be able to tell

you who the thirteenth president of
the United States was without looking
it up – Millard Fillmore – or if Jesus just
left Chicago bound for New Orleans
and a plane leaves Los Angeles
traveling 600 MPH how many more
apples Sally has than Jack when she
is twice his age because the space
reserved for that knowledge is
taken up with Martin Milner
and Kent McCord playing Officers
Reed and Malloy on *Adam 12* which
was produced by Jack Webb who
was Sergeant Joe Friday on *Dragnet*

If my brain was a handicap parking space
it would be occupied by a 1977 Trans Am
like the one in *Smokey and the Bandit*
with the engine running and a bunch
of kids waiting in the car listening
to the radio while their friend runs
inside to grab some beer and
if "Alright Now" by Free came
on the radio I could tell them
that Paul Rodgers was the lead
singer of the band until 1973 when
he left to form Bad Company which
he left in 1983 when he teamed up with
ex Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page
in the group The Firm and is now
touring with the two remaining
original members of Queen

A Ghost Perspective

Stacie Hoffman

I gazed at the family
That took up residence
In what was once mine
Many harvest moons ago

None knew I linger in the air
That supplies them with the flower of life
And I the weed that will never leave
No matter how much you pull
My spirit stays rooted here where I have
Spent my life with my lilac love
With the last gift he ever gave
Strung around my neck
The gold tint peeling through
Years of imprinted rust

I linger in the wind the fans emit
Staring down with pansy eyes
As I strung my mist of an arm
Down there arm in daisy comfort
When the screech of tears
shutters through the house
I watch the sprouts of ghost bumps
Rise to life on their skin
When I offer them my assistance

I look at them with iris light
As one lone bud sways to my existence
And lock eyes with me
I couldn't help but murmur,
"Wake up" as I dissolve into the wall
With the roots of my soul starting to loosen

I gaze at the buds
That took up residence
In what was once mine
With no intention of passing on
Not when someone
Took notice of a weed

ENTRY #4 Kendall Marie Rogers

Ascension

Christopher Asuncion

I believe in you
You believe in me
In each other, we believe
It takes two to stand
Two to tango
When failure lures upon me, your arms are open to break the fall

United, we are envisioned as gods
Divided, I am merely a mortal incapable of productivity
Victimized, a subject under the influence of the grotesque
Oh how fiery jealousy, spite, and bitter envy dare to intrude the doorsteps of our home
Not only will men seek the destruction of our home

But the fires from Gehenna would take delight in the collapse of our roof
Confusion, frustration, and even anger will seep through the cracks of our walls
Attempting to overwhelm the walls and result in destruction
But I say to thee, we shall not fear, for the day the floor under our feet begins to crumble,
The affinity between us will ever be so infinite and unbreakable than its previous states

No man, no flame can separate me from you
No my friend, failure is merely an option that I do not bring to this relationship
The day of division is simply a hallucination; an abominable sight that my eyes avert
Charisma, leadership, effectiveness, and timing are the gifts you offer
I say, in you I believe; for it is only you who can transcend me
from this anthropomorphic form

As the dawn of my era comes to an end, to the Earth, I bid thee, farewell
The gates of your holy city are forever open,
And I begin my ascension into your arms
As your hands grasp my soul gently, taking me from the world

White-Lily Silk

Melissa Dang

Here spawns the truth, I am riddled with guilt,
Loosing and oozing blood stained with black ink,
Ruin the smoothness of white-lily silk.

Phoebe's ivory smile—downward it tilts
Strained and panged with rejection's cold favor
Here spawns the truth, I am riddled with guilt.

Selfish things I have done, words I have spilt.
Taunting and haunting what I cannot undo
Ruin the smoothness of white-lily silk.

Tampered with how love's been rendered and built,
Torn and scorned every last visage of faith—
Here spawns the truth, I am riddled with guilt.

Sewn together, my maimed memoir quilt
Charred and scarred from flames I daringly tried
Ruin the smoothness of white-lily silk.

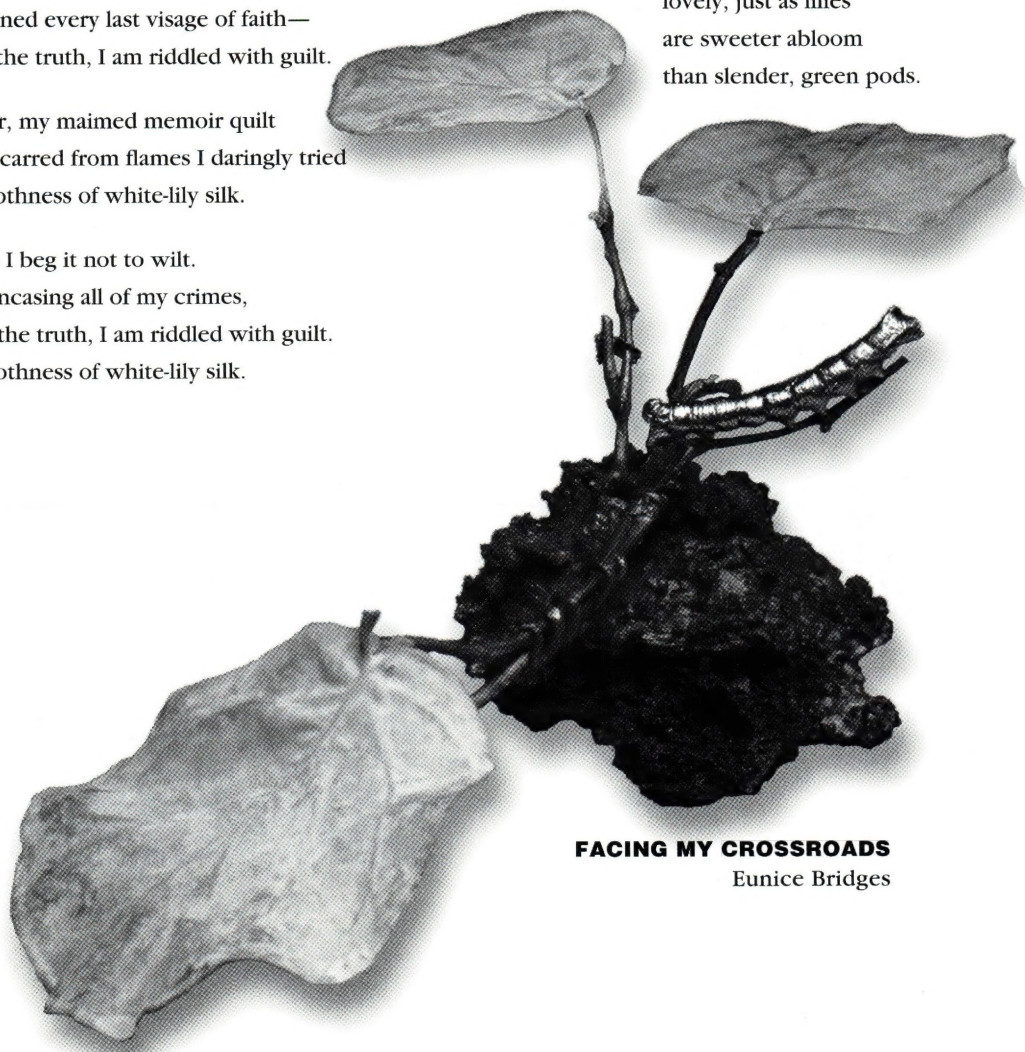
If grace exists I beg it not to wilt.
Wasting and incasing all of my crimes,
Here spawns the truth, I am riddled with guilt.
Ruin the smoothness of white-lily silk.

A Mind Away

Hugh Bramlett

I went to the back
yard of my mind.
As I gazed through
the chain link trellis,
I noticed proud trees
standing like eleven,
reaching maturity.

In the soft light,
I met someone
I thought I knew.
The memory had grown
lovely, just as lilies
are sweeter abloom
than slender, green pods.



FACING MY CROSSROADS

Eunice Bridges



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PHOTOGRAPHY ENTRY #1 Kendall Marie Rogers

Medea

Bonnie Frazier

If you could see
The light in their eyes
Their beauty, overwhelming
Eyes brilliant, gorgeous golden curls
The smell of them intoxicating
Their affection for me bottomless
My children
I swell, I ache

I see their father in their faces
In the turn of their smiles, I see his
With their colors of blue and gold, he appears
Even their words are fashioned from him
Impossible to escape him in them
The man who betrayed me
I, humiliated
Promised to be a second class mistress
A stupid whore, forgotten

My children, now bastardized
Where shall I take them?
And with what provisions?

And if they remain, with her, his new prize?
A woman never wants another woman's children
And I, unable to bear the thought of her near them
Naïve, vacant, she a mere receptacle for him
Likewise, a man never wants children that are not his own
Who will take what is spoiled?
No man will take me with my sons

Incapable of fleeing with them
Unbearable to leave my sons with vipers
I must ruin my progeny
Slaughter them
I will relieve their burden, their pathetic existence
Heirs to nothing

A prelude to their demise:
First the death of his new bride, then her father
Poisoned by my wedding gift
My precious children I will take myself
with no sorcery
Only a knife to slit their throats
Holding them as they perish

My husband will be left with nothing, broken
And I will flee to higher ground

Treasure

Bonnie Frazier

rummaged through a dresser drawer of yours tonight
the one with watches, knives, odds and ends
a treasure chest
ransacked it the way one's child always does
eyes wide, cooing over my spoils

picked a knife and wore it proudly all over the farm
stomped in my boots to the barn, my knife and I
whittled sticks, warded off imaginary predators,
carved my name in the dirt

far from the first pillage
you unaware, my history of plundering the
sparkling menagerie of mom's jewels
carefully, each piece returned to the same location
concealing where I had been
the only pirate to return her prizes, the most
tangible representations since her death

unable to grow up together
denied the pleasure of rifling through your stuff
a relished compulsion for every child
suspecting what I will need to hold onto you,
which treasures shall I take?

Dylan Thomas' Wartime Plea

Diana Alatalo

World War II (WWII) darkened the entire globe. Peace and freedom trembled at the prospect of world

domination by the Axis nations. This situation did not escape the notice of the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas. Sometime between 1945, when he learned that his own father was dying (Napierkowski, et al. 49, Tindall 204), and 1950 (Maud, "Chronology" 296), Dylan composed the poem "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night." Although critics credit Thomas's father's own mortality for the inspiration for the poem, "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" chronicles the fight for freedom and peace during WWII and pleas with the world to never surrender freedom.

Thomas published "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" in 1952. Thomas explained in a letter to a friend, that the delay in publication was due to Thomas' desire that his dying father not see the poem (Napierkowski, et al. 49). The last stanza of the poem appears to be addressed to the poet's father. The poem also echoes aspects of the unfinished poem "Elegy" that critics claim Thomas wrote in memory of his father (Napierkowski, et al. 57, Tindall 206). The foregoing facts lead many critics to examine "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" in respect to the poet's father's terminal illness. For example, Tindall claims the grave men in the fifth stanza represent poets and the "'blind eyes' lead Thomas back to his father; for, although no poet, he too was blind in his last years" (205-6). Kidder believes the poem to be an attempt by Thomas to understand death and the lack of religious imagery results from his father's agnostic views (Napierkowski, et al. 56). Hochman asserts that the poem's mention of "father" in the final stanza enables readers to realize "that the specific addressee is Thomas's sick father" (Napierkowski, et al. 56). The critics fail to explain Thomas's word choice within "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" that proves to be essential in understanding the poem's underlying message.

Julian Symons classifies Thomas's poetry as obscure because Thomas "endeavor[s] to conceal what is in fact very simple matter, though its writer [Thomas] may intend it to be very profound matter" (66). The word death occurs once in the poem, yet the aforementioned critics continue to reference the poem to physical

death, especially the death of the poet's father. The obscurity of the poem lends itself to this assumption. This assumption clouds other factors that may have influenced Thomas's writings, namely, world events. The central event of that time was WWII, which inspired a plethora of war poems.

Thomas is credited with publishing only a "few war poems" (Magill 2882). "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" is not classified as a war poem. However, WWII greatly influenced Thomas's life and art. WWII's arrival "fostered an apocalyptic spirit among poets" (Kershner 118). The war's effect manifests itself in many of the

poet's broadcasts during and after the war. For example, in the January 1946 broadcast on Welsh poetry, Thomas notes how Alun Lewis, a fellow poet, died while serving in India during the war. Thomas comments on how Lewis acknowledged that "in war, poetry is in the pity... and, like Owen, he could never place himself above pity but must give it tongue" (Maud, *On the Air* 46). Thomas writes of the bombings of London in his play "The Londoner" recorded in July 1946 (82). In "Return Journey," he precisely reports "about the bomb damage from the air raids of February 1941" that occurred in his childhood town of Swansea (177). Thomas felt strongly about the war and circulated an anti-war petition in 1940 (Kershner 243). Considering the timeframe during which Thomas wrote "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," evidence suggests that the poem primarily references events specific to WWII, and that Thomas, by the end of the war, recognized the war's necessity and encouraged the world to fight for freedom and peace.

The first line of the poem addresses an individual characterized as "gentle." The archaic word "gentle" indicates a person of an upper, or superior,

class. The Axis nations committed great atrocities against weaker national groups, demonstrating that they embodied a debased, barbaric disposition. Conversely, the Allies liberated those oppressed like knights in shining armor. Thomas commands "gentle" not to enter "that good night." Thomas juxtaposes "good" and "night," indicating a paradox (Napierkowski, et al. 51). The oppressive governments of the Axis powers, as previously mentioned, exercised their power with evil intentions. Their rule brought darkness upon their subjects, essentially night. Hence, "good night" contradicts itself, proving false. Clearly, from the first line, Thomas addresses the political issues during WWII.



WW3 Ellis Rivera

The second line commences with advice for “old age.” Considering the word “age” refers to a generation, “old age” indicates the older generation alive during WWII. That generation experienced World War I (WWI), the Roaring Twenties, and the Great Depression. Thomas advises these elderly ones to continue to care, to “rave and burn,” concerning the principles of the war, even though they are “at close of day” and may not live to experience suffering if the Axis powers triumphed. The exhortation continues in line three when Thomas reiterates the need for “old age” to “rage” or fight against the “dying of the light.” The use of the rhyming pair of “night” and “light” emphasizes their dichotomy. If “night” refers to the dark rule by the oppressive governments of the Axis powers, then “light” indicates the divergent liberating rule offered by the Allies, which provides considerable freedom in comparison to the “night.”

The second stanza focuses on “wise men.” In June 1946 during a broadcast on the poetry of Wilfred Owen, Thomas stated that a “wise man...achieve[s], for himself, a true way of believing” (Maud, On the Air 101). This definition was not all inclusive because Thomas indicated that Owen was a “wise man” for a different reason, which he never defined (101). However, that definition aids in identifying the “wise men” in “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night.” Thomas mentions Einstein in at least two of his broadcasts, “Margate-Past and Present” and “Return Journey” (105, 183). Albert Einstein epitomizes the “wise men.” Einstein publicly encouraged pacifism until the Nazi party came to power, prompting him “to urge the world to meet force with force” (Schwarz SM38). Einstein contributed to the war effort, most notably by aiding in the creation of the atom bomb that ended the war with Japan. The poem states that “wise men...know dark is right.” Since Thomas uses the word “dark” instead of “night,” he desires to convey a different connotation. In reference to Einstein, that “wise” man recognized before his “end” or death that war and the atom bomb, both “dark” in the sense of destructiveness, had an appropriate use in the world (“Einstein Urges World” 17). Similar to the rhyming pair in the first stanza, the second stanza contains the rhyming pair “right” and “night.” This pair forms a paradox comparable to the paradoxical “good night” with the same intent. The remainder of the stanza supports this conclusion. The reason the “wise men...know dark is right” stems from the fact that “their words had forked no lightning.” Referring to Einstein, as a pacifist, his words promoted abstaining from war for any reason. Yet, his “words” did not cause the nations to locate a means to peacefully halt Nazi terror. He was unable to divide or “fork” the powerful nations or “lightning” into another course of action. Thus, the stanza concludes with the “wise men,” like “gentle,” resisting the paradoxical “good night.”

The third stanza introduces “good” or moral “men” (Napierkowski, et al. 52). During WWII, Mohandas Gandhi, a highly-principled civil rights leader, continued his fight for India’s independence from Great Britain. Like Gandhi, Thomas possessed

no great love towards Great Britain (Van Wert 277), and Great Britain considered Gandhi's campaign a threat during the war ("Gandhi and India" 18). Gandhi's final attempt or "last wave" consisted of a fast while imprisoned, which contributed to his failing health. The war overshadowed the Indian Nationalist Movement, thus, Gandhi's fast failed (Matthews 10). Gandhi, capable of only "frail deeds" due to deteriorating health, mourned or "cr[ied]" concerning the failed fast. If Gandhi's fast had occurred outside the confines of WWII, then his "bright" or luminous "deeds" or actions would have enabled the Indian Nationalist Movement to celebrate or "dance" in Bombay, the "green bay" and seat of the movement ("Gandhi's Release" 31). Unlike the previous two stanzas, the rhyming pair of "bright" and "light" in this stanza emphasizes their complimentary nature. The people of India desired the "light" of freedom and attempted to publicize their "bright...deeds" in regards to gaining that "light." Bombay derived its name from the Portuguese words Bom Bahia meaning "good bay" ("Mumbai: An Introduction"). The color "green" appears to have "normal adjectival associations with items of landscape (Havard 814). This association of "green" with an ocean bay resembles how Thomas described the bay of New Quay as "green as grass" in a 1944 broadcast (Maud, *On the Air* 10). The stanza climaxes with the exhortation by Thomas for Gandhi to continue to fight and "rage against the dying of the light."

The "wild men" in the fourth stanza represent the soldiers fighting for the Allies. In particular, the "men who caught and sang the sun in flight" refer to the soldiers who delivered the atom bombs over the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki located in the Land of the Rising Sun, Japan. The atomic age affected Thomas, who mentioned it in his broadcast about Wilfred Owen (95). Those soldiers, or "wild men," aided in capturing the "sun" or Japan's surrender and initially "sang" or rejoiced in the success of their missions. The full consequences of their mission the men "learn[ed], too late" and "grieved it [the atom bomb] on its way" to the cities. The rhyming pair "flight" and "night" highlight the disparity between the Allies and Axis powers. Thomas ironically classifies "wild men" with "gentle" in the final line of the stanza, indicating both parties need to resist entering "that good night."

Thomas further develops the previous line of thought when he introduces the "grave men, near death," at the start of the fifth stanza. These men represent the individuals housed in the Nazi concentration camps and later liberated by Allies' forces, including the British. Their situation remained "grave," and their lives hovered "near death." The juxtaposing of "blinding" and "sight" introduces another paradox. As in the phrase "good night," "blinding sight" contradicts itself, proving to be a lie. Rather, these individuals "see" or understand their situation with "sight" or perception that is "blinding" or hidden from the rest of the world. The rhyming of "sight" with "light" underscores the importance of the "light" to these "grave men, near death." If the "light" dies, they die. Their circumstances "blind[s]" their "eyes" or sight from hope. However, if they possess hope, then their "blind eyes could blaze" or proclaim their "light" or

freedom as vividly as their literal liberators flying in the British fighter jets known as “meteors” (Vosser E4). Proof that their liberation nears, the “grave men...could...be gay.” In the final line of the stanza, Thomas pleads with these “grave men” and urges them to continue their fight “against the dying of the light.”

The final stanza addresses the reader’s “father,” or nation. Thomas believed “good poems...are ageless” (Maud, *On the Air* 99). A person may not be acquainted with his or her biological father, but everyone possesses a nation they look to as their fatherland. Thomas’ reference ensures “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night” retains a timeless quality. In direct reference to WWII, Thomas notes that his “father,” Great Britain, looms “on the sad height.” Throughout the war, Great Britain suffered terrible losses. While she retained her “height” or stature as a world power, her physical and economical condition appeared “sad” or deplorable. The rhyming of “height” with “night” serves to emphasize how close the Axis powers came to usurping Great Britain’s position as a world power. The subsequent line begins with the direct address “curse,” as indicated by the punctuation. In this stanza, “curse” identifies with the previous direct address “father.” Thomas utilizes the derogatory term “curse” to express his anger at his “father,” Great Britain, who “offered scant praise for his poetry” (Van Wert 277). Additionally, when the war began, Thomas “determined not to be involved in it,” yet poverty required him to write “scenarios for war documentaries” (Magill 2882). Addressing Great Britain as a “curse” verifies Thomas’s resentment toward her and the war. Thomas proceeds to request an immediate, “now,” “bless[ing]” from “curse.” The juxtaposing of “curse” and “bless” indicates a dichotomy. This dichotomy illuminates the dramatic irony Thomas presents because only the reader is able to discern the aggrieved, but dependent, relationship between sovereign and subject. Thomas recognizes that despite his objection to war, like Einstein and Gandhi, he desires to live in a land fighting for the light. He, thus, beseeches Great Britain to utilize her “fierce tears” or violent destruction to benefit him.

The concluding two lines reiterate the opening plea. Thomas identifies “gentle” with “father” and “curse,” indicating their superior class despite their imperfections. The final line repeats the plea “rage, rage” for the fourth time. The repetition of the word “rage” indicates the poet’s desire to emphasize the importance of this fight. The poem concludes with the word “light,” leaving the reader with the positive images of liberation and freedom worth fighting for.

The events of WWII clearly influenced the composition of “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night.” The poem illuminates the war’s effect on the author and the world. Thomas, thus, completes the themes of liberation and freedom that weave throughout the poem as it applies to the different populations and reinforces the need to “rage” or fight against the extinguishing of the “light.”

The Red Spider Lily

Beth Turner Ayers

Once a year, every year,
I watched for it,
Never quite sure of the
Exact location until
Tiny, pointed, green spears
Tore through dry, brown grass.
The spot was revealed and
I reveled in the knowledge.

The memory waited,
Wanting clarity
And confirmation that
Wisps of bright red satin
Bloomed into organized chaos,
Changing past into present
With expectations for future
That must also depart into past.

Many years now
Have relied on mere memory.
No empty patch of winter grass
Calls for observation but
Nostalgia nudges bits of brown earth
Erupting with Spring and
Once a year, every year,
The Red Spider Lily still blooms.

Redline Heading North

Karis Strannemar

Superficial whispers
sounding at the back of the train
“She has nice teeth”
As if the woman was a horse
Future Frat boys plan their lives around the
Court of white bright smiles
posing half said truth
always starting with
the obsequious
interjection of
“Cool”
And sleeping long
With the movement of the train
Rocking in its womb
The brethren
of regular people sigh
their tired sighs
without bright teeth or
Saying “cool”
We sit in the same air
But the imaginary place
Makes the car seem separate in
Each world
And enters the Hindu Goddess
Nirvana dressed in crimson
Flowing scarves with long dark hair
Her bridegroom Neru following
They sit clustered amid us
Smelling of mystery and curry
And silencing the peanut gallery
In us all.



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Busy Bees

Beth Turner Ayers

Words leave her mouth
Like bumble bees
Buzzing, swarming,
But not stinging.
Busy chaos comes
With each breath
As I try to focus,
To stay on track.
But the track splits,
Diverges, divides,

Then doubles back
To repetition.
So I nod, and utter
“Oh”, “Um”
And even “Oh my!”
While I plot
My escape.



HEART OF THE MATTER Eunice Bridges

The Siren's Song

Amy Holt

What am I to do with all these men cooing?
And those bird-things cackling like a bunch of geese?
I heard them an hour ago; "singing" or "serenading" as the men called it.
Serenade? The so-called "song" doesn't even have a disco beat.

It all started when Sammy, young know-it-all,
Tried to take the wheel from my hands.
Steering the ship toward the beached skull in the Siren's red waters,
Open eyes beaming and contorted,
That's how they get when a red-lipped woman glances their way.
I was busy; a poised captain looking over the trimmed and lean muscles
Of the cleaning men. (I wondered if I worked them too hard, they
Didn't have an inch of fat on them. But then again,
I thought, maybe the workload is just fine.)

A few girls think they're really funny.
These men are mine. It was I who chose them out of a group of hundreds:
Strong, bold, skintight-jeanned and able. Not the feeble.
That kind wasn't to be my crew.
My heaven has now become my hell.

Crazed men, fighting me! Of all men, their leader and closest comrade;
It was I, who made their uniforms out of only spandex and polyblend,
Half shirts tied at the ribcage to keep them cool, and shorts mid-thigh
And tight, so as to not tear on the rough edges of the ship's corners.
All thought out carefully, only for their comfort and nothing else.

Now I sit here alone wondering about my men and those nasty clucking hens.
All went overboard; some are downing in the murky water,
And others chasing the rabbit down her sloppy hole. Well,
I hope they're happy; leaving comfort and good cheer
For those bleeding, blabbing bitches.

With my sea men all gone, what am I to do but rise to the occasion?
I take of my captain's hat, kiss away my pride and sanity,
And jump in to see who I can save.

Eden's Burden

Casey L. Jones

From the corner of a busy restaurant patio we watch children play in puddles of fresh rain, and from beneath your dark glasses, a tear falls. It trickles down the side of your face, collecting along your delicate jaw line. It dangles there, sparkling in the light, signaling to me with flashing colors. Reaching across the table, I brush aside a loose strand of your hair and wipe the tear from your cheek. Your eyes are fixed on a little girl with pigtails.

She waves, but you turn away. Your eyes sink mournfully to your side where a bird hops about the patio floor in search of crumbs.

"I'm sorry," you say shaking your head.

"Leah, it's ok. I understand, but at some point we have to learn to move on and find happiness with what we have. Don't you agree?"

"John, you don't understand."

"Then, help me to, Leah. Please...what am I not understanding?"

Wrinkles bunch along your brow and your chin begins to quiver. Beside us, a waiter lays out some menus and seats a young couple. You pull the napkin from beneath your glass and slide stealthily to the back of the bistro while concealing your eyes from the chattering tables around you. I run my hands through my hair, puzzled and flustered, staring at the patterns along my empty plate.

Across the promenade, a group of musicians gather on stools amidst open black cases, while tourists and shoppers set down their bags and take seats along the edge of a fountain. The crowd grows silent as the strings begin to play.

I pay the bill and wander out through the patio gate, occasionally glancing back to the restaurant for Leah while I ponder over the doleful cries of two violins

Patience, I tell myself. Just give her time.

We met at a wedding in Santa Barbara, three years ago this June. You were laughing with a friend when our eyes first met. I asked you to dance, and by the end of the night I knew my days as a bachelor were over. We were inseparable that first summer, and by fall we were married.

We bought a condo, just down from the Santa Monica pier, and spent many late nights talking on our balcony and gazing out onto the sleepy ocean. The lights of distant ships sailed across the black horizon as we charted the course for our new life together. We both wanted children, and given our age, we decided it best not to wait.

Spring came and went, and our dreamy conversations about parenthood grew increasingly tense, as if Aphrodite were eavesdropping from inside our sliding glass door, ready to curse our fertility for presuming too much. We tried everything in the course of that next year, but to no success. You were heartbroken

and shunned my attempts to comfort you. You grew distant and depressed, and slowly retreated into your own silent world. Left in my solitude, I struggled to read between the emotional lines. Perhaps we would never have children of our own, but after all, wasn't it out of our hands? And why would you pull away from me at a time like this?

One morning, you were sulking over a cup of coffee. "I can't teach anymore," you said desperately. "It's too painful to bear." Your eyes were swollen and red. I pulled up a stool next to you and you melted into my arms. Our sadness slowly turned into passion and we made love like newlyweds.

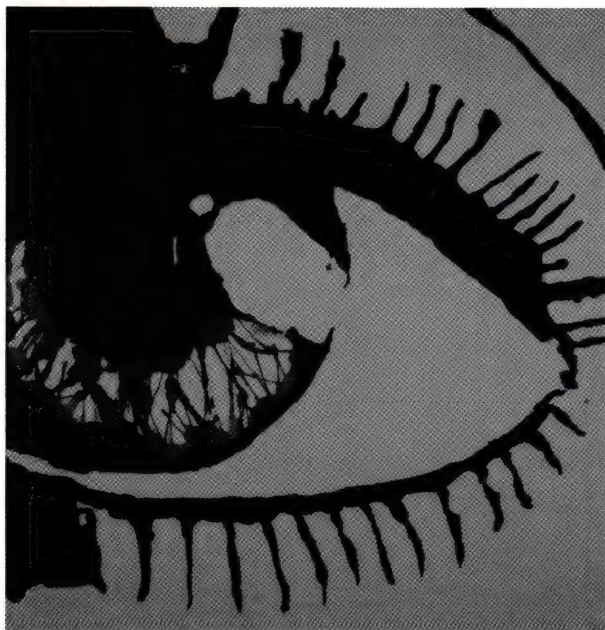
I thought the gloom was beginning to lift, but my hopes vanished quickly. Our evening walks along the beach became sufferable chores; every child we passed seemed to rip the scab off a wound that refused to heal.

Overhead, the sky rolls in a smoky haze, and I watch the cloudy figures take shape as the orchestra plays. I'm startled by the touch of your lips against neck. They tickle along my collar and I turn around to meet them. Your tender kisses give me hope and I savor the moment with my arm around you, as the two violins softly bring the song to an end.

"I'm sorry, John."

"It's all right," I say, trying to sound as comforting as possible. "Do you want to walk around, catch a little fresh air?"

You nod and look at me as if wanting to explain, but before you can speak the orchestra begins to play, and you settle for a peck on my cheek.



SEEN1 Abigail Long

We stroll down the promenade with our fingers intertwined, wandering beneath the towering rows of palms and eucalyptus. The smell of jasmine drifts through the air, while people linger from one store to the next. A mime clad in solid white, approaches us with an embellished sad frown. He pulls a rose from behind his back and you blush. Your beauty is captivating. Even the mime can't help but smile.

We turn down a quiet side street towards the beach, trying to escape the crowds, when a lavishly decorated store front grabs our attention. Framed with pink clusters of draping bougainvillea is a small sign reading: "Friends from Eden," and painted below is a mural depicting Adam and Eve, nestled beneath a tree and surrounded by a host of exotic animals. We hear a dog yelp from within, and you tug at my hand, pulling me towards the store.

The doors part for us as we approach, luring us in. Mist rolls out at our feet and the pavement gives way to finely crushed earth. My eyes strain to adjust to the dim lights as I take in the scene.

Tree branches stretch above our heads, forming a canopy of leaves and limbs and the walls are lost behind bushes and vines. A magical forest spreads before our eyes, and the soft chirps of birds filter down to us from hidden nests above. Beads glisten down my arm as the humid air condenses and cools against my skin. We hear another yelp and follow it further down a winding dirt path. The bushes rustle with life, and butterflies flutter through the air. Approaching a tall hedge, the path takes a turn and opens to reveal a softly lit meadow, with a tree standing in its midst. Its foliage is speckled with colorful fruit, and beneath it a little red fox stares inquisitively back at us. He looks up at the tree and yelps, the same cry that drew us within, and then scurries away into the tall grass. We walk towards the tree, and gaze at its mystical limbs. Golden pears and ruby red apples dangle like ornaments before our eyes. You look back at me and then reach up towards the tree, pulling down one of the jewels for closer inspection.

The tree rustles and a sudden shriek startles us from above. We freeze, expecting the wrath of some god-like caretaker, when a high raspy voice crackles and begins to sing.

"Braak...One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do, Braak."

Perched on an open branch is a tall, colorful bird with swirling checkered eyes. His scarlet crowned head is ruffled and frayed. He rocks up and down, beating his wings as he squawks. Your face becomes solemn, and your eyes close, like Moses being humbled before the burning bush.

"Braak...Two can be as bad as one...Braak."

The fruit slips from your fingers as you turn and look up. The bird settles and puffs out his faded red chest like a battle worn soldier, gazing proudly back at you from over his crusty beak. You step towards the bird, and he, in turn, lowers

his broad head and shuffles along the branch to meet you. To my amazement, you hold up your hand and the bird takes a fluttering step down, lacing his claws around your fingers.

“John, there’s something I must tell you.” Your eyes start to swell and your jaw rocks from side to side.

“What is it Leah?”

You hesitate, and the bird climbs to your shoulder, spreading his wings, parading its multicolored feathers underneath.

Pregnancy

Talmeez Burney

Once a dream
had dinner with us
and it

stayed overnight.

Like goose bumps
it managed to insert itself
between us.

When we were done love making
panting in each other’s arms,
it split.

You got the dream;
I got the flesh and blood.

Unequal
division
of our first vision.

Your eyes become windows, opening slightly to reveal the hidden torment inside. I see you sitting cross legged in a robe at the end of a narrow hall. The walls are barren. You rock back and forth, biting your nails. The lights flicker and you cover your face, rocking faster and faster. My throat tightens, my stomach churns...

“John...”

You reach for my hand and pull me out of my daze. I follow you as we wade through a field of poppies toward a wall of dark trees. A thick fog swirls along the forest edge masking its depths as we approach. You press ahead, while the bird swivels his head back and forth, watching me carefully from your shoulder.

The periphery begins to fade as we pass through the trees. The chirping birds become muffled and the earth crunches beneath our feet with every step. We follow along the path in complete silence, until the faint sound of laughter begins to resonate within the fog.

“It’s all my fault, John. This whole thing’s my fault,” you say as we continue down the widening trail. I want to empathize with you, but I don’t understand what is happening.

Ahead, the path turns to sand and a pier stretches out into the foggy abyss. I look over at you and stop, astonished. The bird towers over you with his claws straddling both of your shoulders. It has doubled in size and its feathers are smooth and vibrant. I reach for your arm and pull you closer. Your face is smooth and tight, a younger face that I had only seen in photos.

“I was pregnant before. Before I met you, John. I never should have done it.” Your innocent young voice takes me by surprise. Your lower lip trembles.

The colossal bird glares down at us, unfurling his wings the length of your body and beating them against the mist.

“Braak. One is the loneliest number.”

As we walk out onto the pier, the echoing laughter grows louder and from the haze appears a ticket booth and carnival. We pass a parade of strange dream-like animation: children with rotten teeth tote pink clouds of candy, a blindfolded man throws knives at a girl tied to a spinning wheel, and a doctor gazes closely into a crystal ball, handing out fortunes to a line of young, impressionable girls. I hear voices calling your name from the Ferris wheel high above, but you continue on your path. As we approach the end of the pier, a strong gust of wind rattles the planks, spraying our faces with salt. The ocean rumbles beneath our feet and waves crash against the wooden piles.

You turn to me, pushing your dark auburn hair from your face. Your eyes are lined in blue, and your lips sealed in pink.

“Leah?”

“I was seventeen and I was alone and scared. I didn’t think things through. I just couldn’t deal with it. I’m so sorry.” Rivers of blue makeup flow down your cheeks.

The bird has now grown to menacing heights, and his fiery breast looms overhead. Newspapers and popcorn swirl about the pier, as the bird flaps his monstrous wings in protest. His deafening cries sail through the fog, like a fleet of tortured souls.

“Braaak. Two can be as bad as one. Braaaaak.”

Your arms are jelly-cold, and your narrow shoulders buckle beneath the weight of the bird. “We can work through this, Leah. Nothing can change the way I feel about you.”

“Why should God ever trust me again? I’m sorry John, I’m so sorry.”

Sharp turquoise feathers thrash from one side of the pier to the other, splashing into the ocean as they extend beyond the rails. The bird’s claws broaden and stretch, wrapping around your delicate frame. I tug and jerk at them, trying to pull you free, but I can’t. The harder I pull the tighter they squeeze, and your face is throbbing red. I lean into you closely.

“We all have made decisions we regret Leah, but we can get through this together, I promise.”

A turbulent wind bears down as the feathery giant begins to lift you away from me. Your pale blue eyes open wide with fear, as if suddenly aware of the bird’s divisive intent. My fingers slide down your slippery arms as you’re

pulled higher and higher into the air. In a sudden burst of panic, you scream and reach out for me, "John...No!" You struggle and twist, fighting the serpent-like grip with every bit of energy you have. The bird screams as you flail and begin to pry the claws loose. With a desperate last heave, you pull yourself free and fall to the pier below. I cover you with my arms as the bird breaks away and begins spiraling above, leering at us with his giant checkered eyes.

A warm gust of air blows in from the ocean and the heavy veil of fog swirls and scatters. Darkness gives way, and the sky ignites into a radiant orange glow. The bird shudders and turns to retreat, screeching in vain as he flees from the miraculous light. He tears through the sky like a comet and is quickly lost in the fiery firmament above.

The winds slow to a gentle breeze and a peaceful calm ensues. The ocean face sprawls out before us like glass, and the division between water and sky is lost in a shimmering horizon.

"It's gone Leah," I whisper. We're alone now on the pier, and your face is buried against my chest. The sun spreads over us like a blanket of warm protection.

"Do you still love me?" you ask, squeezing me tightly. My eyes swell and begin to burn from a sudden rush of emotion; I find it hard to reply without sobbing.

"Of course I do Leah. I love you more than ever."

You turn and look up at me. The familiar signs of age have returned, but the gloomy veil has been lifted. Your crystal blue eyes are as big and bright as the sun and a sparkle of hope dances freely within them, signaling to me with flashing colors.

Delivered

Bonnie Frazier

The International Bible Deliverance
Center

looked like a truck stop
off highway 45, between Houston and
Dallas.

Beneath a hot tin canopy
you can get delivered in 5 minutes.

5 minutes for \$9.95

10 minutes for \$ 19.95

30 minutes for \$49.95

(includes emotional baggage
and/or evil spirit removal)

Guaranteed. No refunds.

Tap water always available upon request.

Some days there is warm lemonade.

I saw a sign.

Apartment Walls

Melissa Dang

It is only a wall
Color makes no difference
To the voices on the other side
Speaking and interjecting.

It's not eavesdropping
If the noise is unavoidable;
Headboard thudding
Every ten seconds.

It is only a wall
But I know the woman below
Is pregnant with her boyfriend's
Brother's baby.

It's their secret
Locked up and rotting inside.
One can only hope
Infidelity is not genetic.

It is only a wall
Made to separate us
Keep the neutrality
Pulsating with nonchalance.

Stranger's unwanted pity
Cringing at the sound
Of a family who's been

It is only a wall
Boxing in our bodies
But our voices permeate
Like insufferable perfume.

The woman next to me
Shoves a chair underneath her door
It's double locked with a bolt
She doesn't sleep till 3 A.M.

It is only a wall
But our emotions seep
Underneath and through
Till we can feel each other listening.

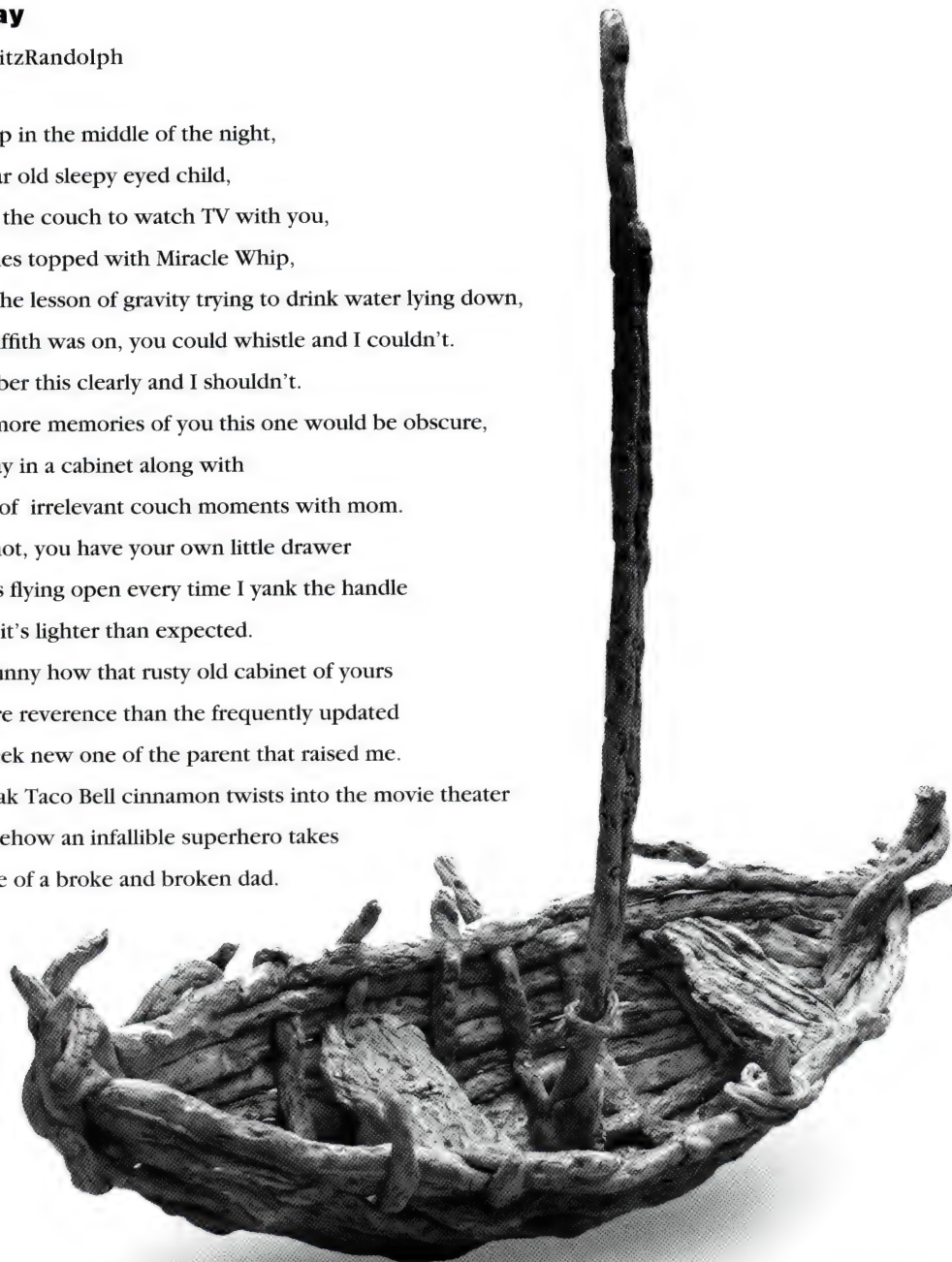
I know he's fifteen and unconfused
But even if I pretended,
I know it's not a hammer nailing
A photograph of an understanding
father.

It is only a wall
No more different than standing
Face to face
With our eyes closed.

Filed Away

Kaitlin FitzRandolph

I woke up in the middle of the night,
a five year old sleepy eyed child,
snuck to the couch to watch TV with you,
ate Saltines topped with Miracle Whip,
learned the lesson of gravity trying to drink water lying down,
Andy Griffith was on, you could whistle and I couldn't.
I remember this clearly and I shouldn't.
If I had more memories of you this one would be obscure,
filed away in a cabinet along with
millions of irrelevant couch moments with mom.
But it's not, you have your own little drawer
that goes flying open every time I yank the handle
because it's lighter than expected.
Isn't it funny how that rusty old cabinet of yours
gets more reverence than the frequently updated
shiny sleek new one of the parent that raised me.
You sneak Taco Bell cinnamon twists into the movie theater
and somehow an infallible superhero takes
the place of a broke and broken dad.



MY FATHER'S SHIP Patricia Keller

The Visionary Within

Mari Wells

Editor's Note: *Finalist in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "I Have a Dream" Speech Contest.*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a visionary, a person with unusually keen foresight. Although

he struggled to lift the African American of his generation from despair, he was also able to envision a better future for Americans of all races. Like Reverend King, I also have a vision for a future of promise. The purpose of this paper is to share that vision with you. My two years at Collin College are almost at an end, and my time here has given me an insight into my future; my classes, my teachers, and my experiences have contributed to a future, one of possibility, of problem solving, of facing difficulties with hope, and of connecting with others to achieve our dreams.

I had a vision that I was a piece of artwork like Constantin Brancusi's *Beginning of the World*. This sculpture appears to me like an egg: it symbolizes the beginning, sitting upon a piece of circular glass, which both reflects and absorbs light, as it lies on top of a pedestal of stone. The piece is presented as something tangible representing something intangible, like dreams. I am like the egg, in the beginning of my adulthood, things in my world are reflected and absorbed by me, like the glass. I rest upon a pedestal which represents my childhood. I learned of Constantin Brancusi in my Art Appreciation class last summer at Collin College. I found that even though I am not talented at painting, drawing, or sculpting, I can appreciate art in my own way. Art is like a doorway to our dreams.

I had a vision that I was a physics problem and, that, like the world which faces challenges. I had to develop an equation, or sets of equations, to find a solution. My Collin College physics course helped me to become a problem solver both in mathematics and in life. Even when a solution seems impossible or improbable, that does not mean it is insurmountable. Many of the problems we can now solve today were complete mysteries a half century ago. The

world we live in suffers from problems such as pollution, the struggle to feed populations in agriculturally barren parts of the world, and helping our brothers and sisters across the oceans to fight off infectious diseases like malaria and HIV, but solutions are out there, and working together, we can find them. My dad told me that one person can make a difference, that one person can change the equation. I can be that change.

I had a vision that I was the poem "Sestina" by Elizabeth Bishop. In my Composition II class, I completed a research paper on this work and discovered that it is more than a form of poetry; it is a story about connections and about the circularity of time. All the things I am learning about here at Collin College connect to my dreams. I will pass my knowledge and experience onto those whose lives I touch. And when I face difficult times, like Bishop, times when my teacup is "full of dark brown tears," I will, like the grandmother in Sestina, try to remember there is a "Time to plant tears."

I had a vision that I was in front of a crowd of people making this speech, and despite the fact that I had one of the highest levels of apprehension of speaking in front of people in my Fundamentals of Speech Communication class, I did it anyway. I was not calm and collected like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., instead I was nervous and speaking too fast. I was stuttering a bit and my hands were trembling, but I was sharing my ideas with others. When my grandparents were my age, there were no cell phones, no internet, no Facebook. My generation is the first generation to be so globally connected. This is a great opportunity. We need to be responsible communicators, considerate of each other and our individuality, and like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said in his "I Have a Dream" speech, "as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead."

My two years at Collin College have helped prepare me for my future. I will step forward from these doors as a woman who is hopeful, a woman who is a problem-solver, a woman who is better equipped to face difficulty, and a woman who can communicate with others, face to face, or from a podium, in order to achieve her dreams. We as citizens of our communities, citizens of our world, have a responsibility to rise to our potential. In the first inaugural address, George W. Bush said, "We are bound by ideals that teach us what it means to be citizens." I ask you to join me in being a citizen, and like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we too, can be visionary.



TURBINE #82 Robert Shipley

Sunny-Side Up

Jessica Gonsoulin

Emma goes into a mall restaurant for her usual breakfast.
It is so late that she could order lunch. Near the door is a sign:
Please wait to be seated.
No one comes. Emma sits at a table by a window with a view of the parking lot.
“Hey!” Marguerite, a waitress, exclaims. “You shouldn’t sit there.
Let me put you at another table.”
Emma moves to the spot Marguerite suggests.
Marguerite lifts her pen to her pad. “What will you have?”
“Let me see a menu.”
“Why do you want to see a menu? You always order the same thing.”
Emma snatches a salt shaker, stands, and sprinkles Marguerite.
Marguerite flicks a napkin at Emma and disappears into the kitchen,
the door swinging back and forth behind her.
“I’ll have my usual, then,” Emma shouts after her.
Marguerite never comes back. Neither does Emma.

Eggs sunny-side up
aromatic black coffee
undercooked bacon

Chili Saturdays

M.J. Dolan

I’d know at breakfast on a late October Saturday
when a light frost glazed
the piles of leaves on the lawn.
Mom took hamburger from the freezer,
then, like a miser counting gold, she stacked
bags of beans on the counter.

I was never in the kitchen when the alchemy occurred—
my mother’s wizardry with hamburger and beans
onions, canned tomatoes and spices.

Ladling directly from the pot,
Dad would fill the bowls and ask:
“Do you want more beans than meat or
more meat than beans?” We’d groan,
my brothers, sisters and I at his old joke.

Then in the 5:30 darkness
that seemed to come too early,
my family gathered around the table,
said grace and ate chili.

EDGE OF THE EARTH Patricia Keller



A Rocky Hill Christmas

David Klewicki

Until the age of six, Christmas Eve's were spent at my Aunt Annie and Uncle Pete Derizinski's

in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. Christmas day would be more or less like what most other mid 1960's middle class families celebrated in this melting pot, but Christmas Eve was reserved for traditional Polish celebration. There was kapusta, pirogues, sauerkraut, kasha and kielbasa. Presents were not exchanged but the memories remain a most special gift.

In the late 60's Rocky Hill was still a rural community. Most of the farms had disappeared but, development had not yet come. It was a mixture of fields and woods; of old farm houses and dairy barns. In the warm months it was a beautiful landscape but in deep winter, when the leaves had fallen and the fields had died, it was a bleak New England scene. My father, mother, sisters and I would climb aboard our boat-like 1960 Chevrolet Impala and drive the short miles across suburbia and into this desolate land.

After crossing the Berlin Turnpike, the demarcation between suburban and rural, the road narrowed. The lights of civilization, of the Turnpikes' restaurants and drive-ins, faded as the road twisted up a hill and past a large Victorian farmhouse. It was a bleak site. The house was in ruins. She stood twisted and sagging; the shattered windows where a portal to a black and foreboding interior. Brush and scrub clung to its stained and faded walls like tentacles. It was as if some subterranean beast drawing the old thing down into its earthly grave. The road continued past a landscape of lifelessness. Cows stood stoically beneath the stark desolation of leafless trees in farmer's fields; their icy breath visible in the cold winter air. I remember thinking how this landscape contrasted from the green fields of neck high hay I ran through in the summer.

Finally, I could see my aunt's house in the distance. It sat at the edge of a large field that had once been part of our families' farm. It was painted a washed out blue grey and, with the exception of being surrounded by cars and a single strand of Christmas lights strung around the eaves, looked outwardly as lifeless as the winter landscape that sounded it.

I remember the feeling of excitement as we pulled in the drive. I anticipated the excited bawdy drone of voices and laughter. The adults would be drinking things with sophisticated names like Martini, Old Fashioned, Tom Collins and High Ball. I knew little of what those were but I could hear the excitement in the voices as the drinks were requested. I would observe the careful mixing and measuring of the ingredients. Cherry's and olives, normally tightly rationed, were in abundance and used unsparingly as ice crashed against the insides of the sleek chrome shaker. All of this was advertisement enough for any boy to long for that day when he too would be among those so privileged as to partake.



BOY (after Seurat) James G. Robinson

We entered through the front door and passed, Dorothy like, from the harsh monochrome of winter into the inviting Technicolor warmth. The living room was a polyester jungle of relatives dressed in those vestments reserved for holidays, weddings, wakes and funerals. The smoke laden air softly glowed from the diffused light of the tree. It was a time for an innocent's observation of all things different. The tree was fake, white and thick with tinsel! Its' lights were as big as our ornaments and glowed red, green, and white! On the coffee table a white dimples bowl held opulent bright gold ribbon candy and nuts to be enjoyed without reprimand. There was the traditional Oplatki, a wafer much like the host used in Catholic mass. The wafer was stamped with religious imagery and would be dipped in honey as the guests would place it on one another's tongues while offering a simple blessing. I was greatly confused by this as a child who had been drilled by some very serious nuns that lay hands must never touch the host. The adults told stories of sneaking out on Christmas Eve and hiding in barns to see for themselves if the animals really could talk for some few moments at midnight. Then there was the prominently displayed Derezinski family portrait. My cousin had divorced that year; however, one might not have known he was ever married for his ex-wife had been expertly removed from the photo. I remembered where she had stood and the closest examination could find no trace of her existence. Although not fully comprehending why, I found this slightly disquieting.

We children were guided to a folding table in the kitchen for the least anticipated part of the evening; the meal. The sausage was passable but heavily buttered boiled grains and sour soups were not for a child's pallet. Served first were the perogues. These tasteless dumplings, pan-fried to perfect toughness and filled with unappetizing cheeses, kraut or prunes, were dropped onto our plates. Then bowls of kapusta were set in front of us; a soup that can be best described as sauerkraut in a vinegar bath. Mounds of Kasha, boiled buckwheat drenched in melted butter, appeared on our plates. I have no

doubt horses would love the stuff. We children appeased the adults by eating the minimum necessary of these traditional mainstays to quench their nostalgic desires, but desert was another matter entirely. Traditionally served was a hard, sweet and fruit filled ice cream concoction frozen in metal ice cube trays with the divider removed. This lush delicacy was worth waiting for. The recipe is now long forgotten and if ever written down has never been found.

After dinner the men gathered to talk, the women to clean and the children were ushered into my Uncle Pete's den. It was nothing like our house. The walls were of wood paneling and vibrantly painted duck decoys were displayed on shelves. An aeonically interesting collection of old mechanical banks was displayed on a table. As the holiday approached I would greatly anticipate the opportunity of playing with those wonderful machines. Of particular fascination was the little iron dog that leapt through the air, a coin clenched in its' jaws, precisely depositing it into a barrel. The room also had a color TV set; a technological advancement that would not find its' way into our home for another decade. I was certain my Uncle Pete must be a wealthy man to have surrounded himself in such lavishness.

Soon the din of adult voices began to recede. The food and spirits had taken their toll, and it was time to leave. I, now cocooned in hooded jacket and gloves, was anxious to get home and prepare for Santa. The necessary milk and cookies needed to be laid out, and more importantly, little boys had to be in bed or Santa might pass them by. A gauntlet of hugs and handshakes was traversed as giant hands mussed my hair. Then the door closed and the night, as intensely calm as it was cold, surrounded us. The sky was pitch black and the stars shown with a perfectly focused and intense light: a pure light. I'd watch the moon as we drove, not understanding how it seemed to follow the car. Turn by turn, the moon was in unrelenting pursuit. Then one of my sisters would blurt out, "Look! There's Santa! There he is. Do you see him?" Time after time as I excitedly scanned the indicated sector of the sky, I heard my sisters' disappointed exclamations of my just having missed him.

I still remember those Christmas Eves at my aunt's house with great fondness and warmth. Those were very special times, times during which my world remained a safe and sure place. That security was soon to evaporate and I, like Jackie Paper, would come to Honalee no more. The feast, unlike the holiday, was moveable and never the same. As the generation that kept the tradition faded, those children of the children of immigrants who sat at the folding table grew to adulthood and, whether because they had families of their own or times just change, the tradition ended. My memories of it feel distant now, as if they are lost in some foggy hinterland between fantasy and reality. They are memories of the world through a child's eyes. How beautiful that over forty years later I can still walk through that door and, if only for a daydreamed instant, live those wondrous moments once more.

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Isaac
1856 - 1887

Lyn Knowles

Dreams of wealth. New World anticipation as
ship sails west. A new continent to conquer yet
still the dank mines. No tales of fortunes made.
No joyous return to mother country. Instead,
pneumonia and an anonymous resting place.

unmarked plot
rustling blades suffocate—
entombment



Enough

Bianca Pittman

If this is the place
where the search and seizure
of gravity (between palms
and interlacing digits)
ends with no discovery,

then this is it.

Reflections – these fiery resurrections
cause an anchoring thing
to become blunt and
pendulous, as if preparing
to fell something
rather than render itself fallen.

This is it,

And the humor reveals itself
in the little sparks that ignite
the vitreous behind each iris.

Your face shines
every time you strategically
place dynamite in my life
even after bits and pieces of me
have already died.

OPENING Linda Sears



CARCOPHONY Patricia Keller

My Buddy Echo

Justin L. Mutinta

We used to write letters to each other.
But not love letters,
In those letters words were spoken that would never fall on another's ears.

Words we could never speak to the world,
For it would never understand what really went on inside our hearts,
despite the smiles and brave faces contending the coldness of the world.

We used to call each other,
But not love calls,
These were calls where the heart was aching at how bad this life was
and wishing for a brighter future.

Through this phone, she'd reach to me:
Her shoulder to cry on, an ear to listen,
A candlelight of hope in this darkness called life.

We used to visit each other,
But not in our dreams,
But physically across the lands with journeys that cost time and money.
Yet as we tried to hide our embarrassments called home,
We'd hug and say to each other, "It's where the heart is."

We grew stronger,
But not as lovers,
More as brothers or best buds, and the best there could be of
because we refused to let life get the better of us.

Because of each other,
Should one have fallen, the other was never too far away to say
a word of encouragement, and keep the team on track.

Sometimes I wonder,
But not all the time,
But sometimes it's in order to appreciate the positive effect
we had on each other's lives.

And it was together,
That we managed to stick it through,
Through thick and thin,
Through the good times and the bad times.

And I would like to thank you, my buddy, my pal, Echo.

God Bless the Service Provider

Austin Shrader

In the distant future, the world as we know it will change. Wars over terrorism, religion, and land will end.

A solution to worldwide hunger will take effect, providing food for everyone in the world. Corrupt and ineffective governments will fall, and all other crises, national and international, will cease to exist. Out of the ashes of the old world, a new society will rise in which all the people of the world will live peacefully and happily together. The cause of worldwide peace and unity is not the result of war or one government reigning over all others. It is the result, however, of man's recognition of the one true higher power. A divine power of such immense knowledge and wisdom that far surpasses any human learning capabilities. In the future, the world will be ruled by the almighty Cell Phone.

As the sun rises over the horizon on what is promised to be a beautiful Tuesday, the good people of Anywhere, Texas, begin waking up to the start of a new day. The small town of Anywhere is a well organized suburban town with a population of around 17,000 hard working, good Samaritans. In an extraordinary house on an ordinary street, five year old Suzy Smith was just waking up. Little Suzy crawled out of her bed clutching her fuzzy teddy bear to her chest. Wearing her warm and soft pajamas, Suzy quietly walked over to her nightstand and turned on her lamp. The lamp illuminated a brightly colored room with pink and purple walls and toys placed carefully across the room. The lamp also illuminated little Suzy's favorite thing in the world, her cell phone, placed lovingly on the night stand like an idol. A smile spread across little Suzy's cherub like face as she carefully grabbed the wonderful device. Still hugging her beloved Teddy, Suzy pressed the cell phone into her chest, hugging both Teddy and the phone for a moment. Then, Suzy looked down at Teddy in one hand and her cell phone in the other. A brief look of puzzlement flashed across her face as she looked at Teddy and then the phone as if making an all too easy decision. The look of puzzlement quickly left her face as Suzy carelessly tossed Teddy over her shoulder and walked out of her room holding her cell phone lovingly to her heart. Little Suzy walked out of her room and carefully down the stairs. Still holding her cell phone affectionately, little Suzy silently entered an already deathly quiet kitchen to the smell of scrambled eggs and frying bacon. Golden rays of sunshine shone through the windows and danced across the kitchen counter tops. Suzy's father sat at the kitchen table while Suzy's mother stood idly at the counter.



LONELY Christina Chuang

Upon Suzy's arrival, Suzy's parents both looked at their daughter adoringly. Suzy walked over to the table and crawled up and into a chair next to her father.

Suzy placed her cell phone on the table in front of her and continued to gaze at it as if the device might suddenly declare that Christmas had been rescheduled and moved to tomorrow. Suzy's mother reached into a pocket in her apron and pulled out her own cell phone. She stood there looking down at the phone as her fingers flew across its keys like lightning. Finished with the task on the phone, she dropped it back into her pocket. Moments later, Suzy's cell phone lit up on the table and

began to screech and shake as it vibrated around in circles like a dying bird. Suzy quickly grabbed her phone from the table and silenced its wailing like a loving mother to a crying baby with a simple touch of her finger. Bent over the phone, Suzy read the message that appeared on the phone's lit up screen. The message read...

"Suzy darling, do you want some breakfast?" Suzy's mom had texted from the kitchen counter, a mere two feet away from her daughter.

Suzy's fingers swept over the letter/numbered buttons of her phone with similar accuracy and respectively sent her mother a reply. Her mom was waiting though, ready with her phone in her hand to stop the vibrating as soon as it began.

"Yes please, mommy." The message from Suzy read.

Suzy's mother turned and faced the counter, swiping the screen on her phone with a lilac colored finger nail. She entered some brief commands into her phone and then dropped it back into her pocket. When she was done, a plate of freshly cooked eggs and bacon appeared with a light pop on the counter top. The two eggs were arranged as eyes and the single piece of bacon formed a smile; Suzy's favorite. Suzy's mother placed the plate on the

table beside Suzy's cell phone and sat down in a chair next to her husband, the whole while never uttering a word. While Suzy sat quietly eating her breakfast, her father went back to watching the morning news on his cell phone. A pair of jet black headphones emerged out of his phone and snaked up and into his ears. A news anchor appeared on the phone's tiny screen and began talking about yet another story of someone being saved by their cell phone. An even smaller picture appeared in the upper right of the screen next to the anchor of a beautiful middle aged woman. Her name appeared below her: Mary Magdalene. The news anchor went on to tell of a tragic story of how Mary had been driving home one night and skidded on a patch of black ice. The car flew off the road and rolled several times. Her body crushed and bloody from the hellish accident, she managed to find her cell phone from the twisted remains of the car and called 911. With tears rolling down her face, Mary recalled that after she dialed 911; she nearly passed out from her injuries. In her semiconscious state, a heavenly glow seemed to be shining from her phone. Mary went on to tell that right before she passed out, a shimmering silhouette of a man appeared over her and told her she would be okay. The news anchor said something further, and then the news switched to commercials, something about a new downloadable app available to control your lawnmower.

Suzy's father took a sip of his steaming cup of coffee and wiped his peppery mustache with the back of his hand. He shot his wife a text informing her that he was off to work and silently stood up from the table. With a slight pat on Suzy's head and a smile at his wife, he walked out of the room. Suzy was very proud of her daddy. He worked so hard at his job. Every day, daddy would go upstairs and enter his office, closing the door behind him. There he sat all day working, making phone calls, texting co-workers, and creating chart after chart on his phone for various products in the market. At a quarter past six in the evening, daddy would finally emerge from his office, not too tired from the day's work to still play Suzy's favorite tennis game on her cell phone with her. Suzy, still too young to understand, didn't know that every working man around the world did the same thing as her daddy, day after day.

Finished with her breakfast minutes later, Suzy began to piddle with her phone at the table. Her mother gave her a warm grin and made quick movements on her phone's touch pad. The dirty plate zoomed over to the kitchen sink and automatically began scrapping off the remaining scraps of egg and bacon with warm soapy water.

“Suzy, you need to go get dressed and get ready to leave for school.”
Suzy’s mom texted her from across the table.

“Okay mommy.” Suzy replied back.

Suzy left the table and went upstairs to get dressed. Ten minutes later, she came down dressed with her bright pink backpack on, the obligatory rectangular bulge in her front jeans pocket. Her mother stood occupied in the middle of the living room, controlling the duster by pointing her cell phone around the room. After texting their goodbyes, her mother turned away from her dusting and gave Suzy a big hug and kiss on the cheek. Suzy then left for school. Walking right past the front door, she quietly trekked up the stairs and back into her room. Placing her backpack on the floor next to her bed, she pulled out her cell phone and sat at her desk. Suzy pulled out her favorite pair of pink head phones and plugged them into her phone. Scrolling past hundreds of pictures of friends, songs, games, and some of her apps she had gotten for her last birthday, Suzy came to a screen on her phone that read:

Little Oaks Elementary

Educating Your Children Today, In Preparation For Tomorrow

After typing in her screen name, she was logged into her class of twenty six other five year old children. All these children Suzy knew but had never met in person. Above her cell phone’s screen, a little camera focused on Suzy’s face and emitted a holographic version of Suzy into the virtual classroom. Suzy’s teacher, Mrs. Clearwater, sat behind her desk. She graciously watched over all the students as they all logged into the class room with a low humming sound. Back in Suzy’s bedroom, a bell rang out from her phone on her desk, signaling the beginning of class. Mrs. Clearwater rose from her desk and began.

“Today we will continue our lesson on how to further personalize your cell phones button colors.” Mrs. Clearwater trilled in a high pitched voice to the holographic images of twenty seven rosy faced students, all paying strict attention.

“You start by shifting through the main menu to the screen that says...” Mrs. Clearwater whirled on in a squeaky voice.

Little Suzy sat at her desk, immersed in her lessons throughout the school day. The class covered topics such as the history of technology, the scientific anatomy of cell phones, proper texting grammar, and Suzy’s favorite

subject, Service Provider appreciation. Each day, the class would spend at least an hour in which they talked about the Great Service Provider. Suzy would never forget the first day of school when they learned that the Service Provider was the son of God. In class they talked about how the Service Provider united the world and created the now peaceful Great Society that everyone lived in. They learned that the Service Provider was rumored to have magical battery recharging powers and could turn water into gigabytes. The class would draw pictures of the Service Provider and color them in with bright and beautiful colors. Suzy, as well as everyone else in the world of course, loved the Service Provider. He was idolized and thought to be the greatest hero in the world.

The day went by like any other day, peacefully and completely silent. Suzy finished her school work and her daddy finished his work as well. After her dad came out of his office, the family had a wonderful dinner of cheeseburgers and French fries, which tasted a little like radiation. Suzy and her dad even played a game of tennis on their phones in the living room together after dessert.

That night, Suzy sat kneeling down next to her bed in her pajamas to say her prayers, just like any other night. She pulled out her cell phone and bowed her head as she began to text.

"Dear God, thank you for everything you have provided for me and my family. Thank you for my friends and the wonderful life I have. Most importantly God, thank you for my amazing cell phone and all the great things your son the Service Provider has done to keep the world safe and peaceful. Please guide me to grow and achieve great things like Him. In the Service Providers name we pray, TTFN." The text ended.

Similar texts were being sent all over the world, saying the same thing. Suzy stood up from her prayer, and after kissing her cell phone, she lovingly replaced it on her nightstand next to the lamp. She looked around her room momentarily for her teddy bear but gave up quickly with a shrug of her shoulders. Little Suzy quietly crawled into bed without a word and turned off the light. She had a strange dream of a brave little girl hiding in a cold and dark place, writing in a diary. Somewhere near the hiding girl, dark figures with mysterious symbols on their arms continued to march closer and closer.

I Own the Road

Nakita Vojnovich

Sloping, a tar-drizzled court, shoddy as
an excuse for craftsmanship, my road descends like a

concrete trail. You can stand at the top, right next to that weird blue fire hydrant, and watch, gazing over the rooftops of the houses below, as the elder bois d'arc trees stir and sway and wave in the wind, nymphs' hands painting the oranges and purples of the setting sun. It's not like standing at the edge of a cliff, but upon the crest of a wave, revealing a hidden Atlantic community as it recedes from the shore. Trees planted near to the curb lend a portal of

shade; a few badly-pruned crepe myrtles twang like brambles of ocean foliage, contributing nothing but a reason to chuckle at my neighbor's green-thumbed finesse. I remember relating to my mom that I felt like the sky could just suck me off the face of the earth, right there. Into the heavens of that fleecy global expanse I'd vaporize, and I'd touch everything the horizon touches: a dusty golden infinity.

"They say the Texas sky is the most awe-inspiring," my mom had replied, acknowledging its depth briefly, but she didn't understand. She didn't understand, and the words I could have supplied lacked the ballooning that natural wonder asphyxiates you with, so together we started down the road again, ambling quietly to our home.



SHARP SHADOWS James G. Robinson

Dusk is slow in July. The sun and moon converse like benevolent neighbors, and the cicadas and crickets orchestrate a diverse lullaby. Fairies come out for my sixty-something year old neighbor, and the fragile woman, who could be a pixie herself, tiptoes through her front yard toward a glittered bird house that reads, "I do believe!" Rocket, the black cat that's died twice, trots across lawns, meowing, until finally reaching me where I lay sprawled on my back in the middle of the street. The concrete is toasty, and I turn my face so that my ear melts on its surface. Humid air stirs, pushing nothing but the unique aroma of summer—fresh-cut grass from somewhere on the block, coconut SPF lingering on my own skin, mesquite charcoal cooking my dinner in the back yard... dimples poke themselves places at the corners of my mouth, and I can't help but grin openly.

Roads see everything, I realize, everybody, everyday. This road is a timeline of my life, the only one that has been here as long as I. Thinking of it automatically sounds-off the nostalgic brass of my brain, and the road fittingly becomes my own 'memory-lane.' Peace finds me here, and I feel more connected with nature than I would any other place in the world; I just hope one of my neighbors doesn't run over me.

An airplane streaks across the sky, leaving a trail of emission that looks like a rapier. I lie there long enough to see it clash with another, and I realize the lightning bugs are beginning their part in the nightly ritual. Soon the stars will bedazzle a navy tapestry above me, and then Dad will come out and ask me, "What the hell are you doing lying in the road?"

Private Thoughts

David Knappe

Everyone has a place
inside them
where they hold their
most private thoughts
like marbles in a tin

collected there
to look at in private
when doors are closed
no one is looking

hold them up to the light
feel their hardness
coldness
the heaviness
of their weight

quickly
put them back inside you

close the lid
hide them away
before someone finds them
and pours them out

scattering them
like marbles across the floor.

Lost Virgin

Mary Whiteside

PaKuula stole along a narrow passageway toward the mission, inhaling the scent of sage rising from the valley below. She had slipped out of her family's lodgings as the pink of false dawn edged the horizon. Pulling the massive, carved door just enough to wedge inside, PaKuula hesitated while her eyes adjusted to the dim interior of the adobe church. The silence did not betray her as she moved toward the sacristy, her nimble footsteps muffled by the earthen floor. A window set high in the east wall coaxed a reluctant shaft of light into touching the chancel and revealing the florid saints embellishing the reredos behind the altar. She knew he would be waiting; he always found the secret mark she left.

Everyone in the village had helped construct this holy place. As directed by the Franciscan friar, PaKuula's father, uncles, and brother carried timbers as big around as a man from a distant mountain to support the roof, obeying his decree that the logs could not touch the earth as the procession returned. For several seasons, young and old collected the large, round rocks that were transformed into solid walls. Using heavy sheepskins to plaster the soaring stonewalls with mud, her mother and aunts labored many days with other village women.

Sacred places and practices had been essential to PaKuula's family and the village long before the friar came, her people knew if the rituals were ignored their pueblo would be forgotten and the gods would cease to bring rain. However, the friar had captivated them with alluring new practices and remarkable stories—virgin birth, crucifixion, and miracles . . . so many miracles. Over the protests of the pueblo elders, the kiva and the church persisted, old and new, side-by-side. But now famine, marauding warriors, and disease were urgent threats. The people's prayers—PaKuula's prayers—were not answered. Villagers implored both the kachinas and

the saints—what must we do to survive? The elders declared their solution: Remove the new god. Return to the power of the kachinas!

As she had been taught, PaKuula knelt before the Blessed Virgin and painted saints. Her eyes were drawn to a graceful water pot. Illuminated with reddish-brown and white geometric designs, it had been placed on the altar as a gift that rain might come.

With fettered breath, she entered the sacristy. Even before he touched her, she sensed his nearness. They embraced. She could feel the coarse fabric of his garment against her cheek; how warm he was in the new day's chill. Whispering, she told him that her grandfather had received the knotted string indicating today was the day the kachinas would vanquish the friar's god. After this day everything would be different. They both knew what he must do. PaKuula rested her head on his shoulder. As he touched her dark hair, the scent of desert reminded him of all he was leaving.

He was gentle in pushing her away. "You know I must take her and go."

PaKuula left the church. She latched the door behind her and moved noiselessly along the dusty path. As soon as she was gone, he left the sacristy. Genuflecting, he made the sign of the cross, then stepped toward the altar. As tall as he was, he stretched to reach the carved wooden figure dressed in fine white silk and a blue lace mantilla. He wrapped her in soft deerskin, praying that saving the statue from the coming destruction would bring blessings. As he passed the altar, he caressed the edge of his grandmother's water pot. Departing the mission unseen, his precious bundle tucked under his arm, he muttered, "Perhaps rain will now come."



MY LADY OF TEARS Eunice Bridges

Well Fed

Shannon Lee Williams

That's perma-grin you spy
Across my face as Robert
Sings to me in quatrains
From the constant snow in my lap,
in my Subaru

Diverted by a vacuum of mechanical
Disharmony and SLAM!
Are those men's shoes she clomps in
Across the verdant blades
Cranberry polka dots hanging like wet laundry

Her broad shoulders pull tots in haste
Like splashing buckets of water from the well
Their Lily legs skitter beside heels
With smudged cheeks and frenetic limbs

Examining the mismatched clothes too
Small for the April chill
The essence of the spectacle pulls me in
Leaving Mr. Frost on his horse
Holding the placidity of my escape

At the edge of water her fists tear
Day old hot dog buns
In rapid and careless succession
She hurls them at the mallards, swans
Like slop for the pigs

Matted blonde strands jump
Anticipating with tummy growls and giggles
But no beaks grasp at the excess,
The ducks recede toward the rising moon
And I, I have miles to go before I sleep.

Slope of Monjou

Hugh Bramlett

Today came leaning
from the east;
climbing through pines
a haven for birds
of many different feathers.

One squats, weights the air
with haughty rasps,
the swallows flit
and finches sweep about
as bees in nursery, greeting.

A teasing breeze
as in nighttime,
bustles the bronzed oaks
to wave good-bye
in a ruffle, to a hush.

October

Nick McLean

There's a time when the warmth of the land ceases
To come from the sun
and instead rises up from within the Earth
carrying with it the new season
setting afire all the tree's leaves
giving a strange new glow to the sky
before retiring to the ground.

It chases blackbirds from the fence
as it bounds upon its paws, a cat.
It plays around the garden path.
Purring,
It rubs its furry black cheeks on my outstretched hand
Looking at me with eyes of yellow.

It is something strange, all a mystery,
This month creeping in with the moon;
In the middle of the night it enters my room
Arriving late but excited to see me.

Moon

Amy Holt

I saw the moon tonight,
A God-like image lighting the night sky;
Surrounded by darkness,
Looking for an endorsement from a jury of peers.
Stars that are smaller, further away.
We need telescopes to see those up close. Stars,
On television that show off their riches or cry about their past
As they accept awards and millions of dollars to make up for
lack of recognition as children. Technological parts that get
us closer to God or all the mystery.

But you can see the face of the man in the moon.
He doesn't hide, or at least he doesn't choose to.
No extraterrestrial part needed.
He is what he is. Whether you see him or not,
He is there.
He is always there, piece of asteroid or space dirt
Lodged into our gravitational force.

Heavenly love is not temporal,
Nor slighted by pride.
It shines no matter how many dreary clouds roll by
Diminishing it's light.
I watched it. I saw it for myself.
I proved God's existence on a bike ride at 11:43 p.m.
17 minutes before Thanksgiving in the year 2010.

Value has no meaning in heaven.
It rains on the earth like it's everything we touch, or that
Everything we do must be ownership of something important.

That's not how the moon works.
The tides roll in, out.
The oceans diminish.
The moon does its job
Without the need for reassurance over and over again,
Or the need to be valued.

Clouds might darken the stars,
But the moon remains.
No condensation or cluster of wet air will keep the moon
From doing its job.

Saxophone Song

Bianca Pittman

In another life, this song
was moving.
Eyes slammed shut, I inhaled
currents of blue longing,
the somber meanderings of
Love
between exacting ivory footsteps,
your bright spotlight's blue
Searching

Patient phrases collected,
resurrected the spiraled me.
Falsetto - charmed, low-register
crawling in your honesty.
Volumes echoed other-worldly
and I alone interpreted your soul,
(My new home)
distinctly.

In some other place, this song
was ours,
Indefinitely.
Before it was hers or his or hers, and
as sure as your heart arrived in
a dream, piano gliss wings
took the fire away
Left silent tears, instrumental on my
cheek.

A Sweet Hello

Taurean Hill

As I wake to the sun's warmth on my face,
Listening to the morning bird's day song.
I lay there protected in you embrace.
Knowing this simple moment won't last long.

The room is silent, except your soft snore.
Once an annoyance is now a comfort.
The leaves of new fall begin to down pour,
Outside my window to a neat fort.

The peering open blinds make your skin fair.
As your brunette locks rest on the pillow,
Waiting for my fingers delicate care.
When your brown eyes open, a sweet hello.

Those gorgeous deceiving eyes, my mind's trick.
An innocent dream can be so tragic.



Vanity's Temptation

Taurean Hill

It was there in the forest, serene and precise.
Lay a boy transfixed by his looks, beauty and vice.
Longing for the love that only lies in his reflection.
No touch, no kiss, only a wet affection.

Yet a top the holy heights of Mt. Olympus,
Zeus grew bored of his affairs and mistress.
The thrill of the hunt was becoming so passé
It was time for a new man to become his prey.

Over and over he thought who he would use,
Who better than the boy who was his own muse?
Taking the form that the conceited boy preferred,
He chose to mimic the mortal's looks: the perfect lure.

Swiftly and cunning he crept though the night,
Approaching his new lover, cruel intentions in sight.
Narcissus bewildered by the resemblance of the man,
Consumed with lust and the possibilities at hand.

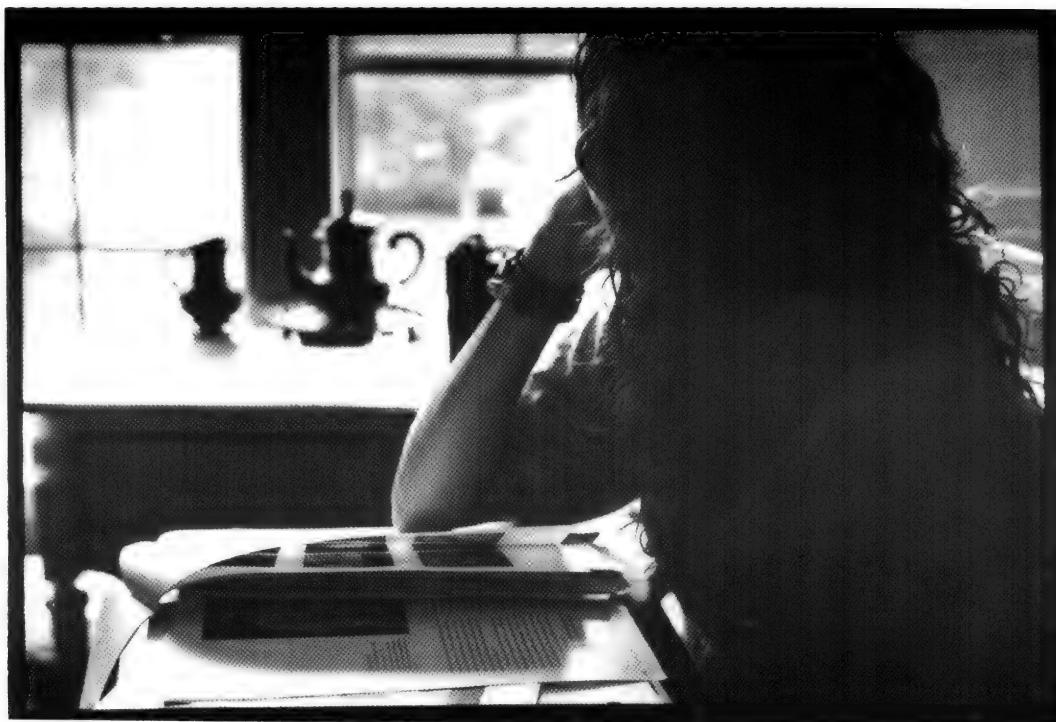
Side by side in a flower bed of white and yellow.
Happily seduced by the similar faced fellow.
A sensual dance under the god's constellations
As the moon begins its transformation.

Dawn to dusk a fool has been fooled.
Narcissus wakes up to a familiar face in the pool.
Leaving the boy unaware that he tricked him,
Zeus moved on to woo his next victim.

A Poet's Married Life

Tamleez Burney

Let's go to bed
his arms whisper,
"Stay awake."
Tossing, turning words
command me,
words
peck on my eyelids,
like a droplet on earth.
His whisper always wins.



I AM DEAF 002 Faizah Shah

Impass

Karis Strannemar

nothing works
pages of half written truths
edits of stuff that need polishing
I sit and try to think where I need to be.

The answer always comes to a fresh sheet
and then vanquishes into slother
All the good words dried up
and went away
leaving this wasteland of thought

Dusty and arid
my thoughts come
like ethereal waves of heat
across the sand.
They are seen,
but when you reach out
they are not there.

Moments evaporating
in the heat I wonder
if I will ever be able to
write something again.

and then the desert blooms for me
The shadows of the raptor
dances on the ground.
The rocks become cathedrals of my soul
The sun reflects light underscoring their beauty.

There are clouds on the horizon
and I smell rain
and hear thunder coming across the sky.
Every living thing resonates
with the vibration of life.

My words begin to trickle down and
flow across the page.
At first slow and gentle
and then into a downpour of thought and emotion.

Pineapple Juice

William J Francis

He certainly didn't consider himself a gawker. One of those jerks who made a point to ogle every woman unfortunate enough to cross his path.

But it was late and the supermarket was practically deserted and she caught him by surprise. He nearly knocked the poor woman over, causing her to drop her frozen entrees, the ones on sale that week, two for six dollars, onto the black and white checkered tiles.

"I'm sorry," the redhead said. "I didn't see—" Only she cut her apology short when she realized where his eyes were glued. His manners kicked in, his ears blazed, and he dropped to the floor and gathered up the two green boxes that flaunted such modern miracles as only five carbs and new and improved cherry crisp.

"Completely my fault," he said righting himself. "I was trying to read the signs, trying to find the frozen pineapple juice, you know, the kind that comes in the cardboard tubes?" He smiled weakly and waited. The hum of the freezer was deafening in the silence. Overhead, one of the florescent lights flickered. At last she nodded, though he couldn't be sure if it was because she did know about juice frozen in a glorified toilet paper roll or if she just thought acquiescence might prove the quickest means of getting the hell away from him.

"Anyway," he went on, "I wasn't looking where I was going." He held the frozen dinners out to her, but when she tugged, he was surprised to find that his hands did not let go. She mesmerized him. Her tanned face. The faint freckles on her cheeks. Her sun streaked hair spilling down her shoulders and covering the straps of the pink ribbed tank top she was wearing. His heart vibrated just behind his teeth, and he had to resist the urge to take in the front of that tank top once more. She tilted her head slightly and peered intently at something. Him. He could sense she was feeling him out. Trying to decide if he was just another Neanderthal. Behind his ribcage, something tumbled and he thought of the big Ferriswheel at the state fair.

"I'm sorry," he stammered. "For not looking where I was going, and for—" this time he stopped short. He cleared his throat and stared down at the frozen dinners, suddenly shy in a way he hadn't been since a teenager standing in front of the nuns at Our Lady of Eternal Suffering Catholic School for Boys.

"Apology accepted," the redhead announced.

He met her eyes in time to see a lopsided smile slowly materialize on her face and right then he knew she had made up her mind about him. He loosened his grip on the sweating entrees; she pulled them from him slowly, and he felt the cool slick cardboard slide across the palms of his hands. "Got a name?" she asked.

"Did you get the juice?" a familiar voice interrupted. And just like that he could feel himself shrinking, melting, like the witch in the Wizard of Oz. He wondered if he could possibly slip away unnoticed, leaving nothing but a puddle of clothing in his place. Associate to aisle nine with a mop, please.

The redhead's green cat-eyes blinked twice in rapid succession and her mouth made that little oh expression. Her gaze dropped to his hand and the gold band that had been hiding beneath her chicken-ala-king.

"Ryan?" his wife asked as she stepped into the space that a minute ago had belonged only to him, this redheaded stranger, and two frozen dinners. Becca had her dark hair pulled through the back of a baseball cap and she had on the same baggy T-shirt she wore yesterday. In her arms she carried a package of tampons the size of their first apartment. He looked from the redhead to his wife and then to the bulky, glossy package promising that four out of five women prefer their gentle-glide applicator to the leading competitor's. "Ryan. Juice."

Ryan nodded perfunctorily. The redhead had gone from looking embarrassed about the situation to looking embarrassed about his situation. She pointed across the aisle to the freezer case directly parallel to the

But I Won't

Bianca Pittman

Folded,
complex and intricate,
like a mysterious
creature of origami,

your arms melt around me.

With a lack of discretion
that is laughable at times,
sometimes your overt squeezes
are just mad sexy,

oddly fashionable.
(like strutting runway
with heart-shaped
Louis Vuitton sleeves-

strings of Calvin Klein kisses
- suspended -
from a curve of shoulder
to the small of my back)

Even in subtle productions, you
move me to wear your colors
boldly (out of season),
permanently on display
for each corner of the world to see.

one she had plucked her frozen dinners out of. Grateful, but not risking a murmur of thanks, he half tripped over his own feet as he hurried to the adjacent case.

He stood much longer than necessary with the glass door open, allowing the frigid air to cool his burning cheeks. He pretended to consider which brand of pineapple juice to purchase. As if he had a choice. Knowing he couldn't stall forever, he grabbed five cans of Minute Maid, two in each hand, one pinched under his arm. Hesitantly he poked his head out of the icy swirls of fog; the redhead was gone. Relieved and heartbroken at the same time, he nudged the glass door with his hip.

He spoke. "My dad used to say there is no harm in looking at the menu." He had meant it to be funny, to break the ice, but even to his own ears he sounded like a jackass. Becca made that same face she made when he loaded the dishwasher too full, or walked to the mailbox barefoot, or forgot to put his razor back under the sink when he finished shaving.

Behind him, the glass door of the freezer finally closed, the rubber gasket making a sucking sound as it sealed. The sound reminded him of a kiss. Not a peck on the cheek like when he left for one of his business trips or brought home flowers, but that frantic kind of kiss that used to leave his lips raw and his chest aching.

Seasons = Delights

Sally A. Roberts

Rain

Droplets

Winter-robed

Crystal snowflakes

Flutter earthbound in winter=s frosty light.

Snowflakes delight in winter=s wonderland

Swirl in sunshine

Springtime=s melt

Droplets

Reign.



SELF PORTRAIT Nakita Vojnovich

Cancion de Amor

Joan Canby

Stocky heavy-limbed men in brown-soiled jeans,
with their sweat-stained white straw hats lean over,
then reach up on ladders, perched high to the August
sun, for the yellow fruit. They measure with rings
the golden lemons, and with their voices from
Guadalajara, Quintana Roo, and Vera Cruz
they begin to sing La Paloma.

I walk down our hill listening with my English
bulldog, his wet jowls swinging, beside me. I walk
with my white lace bonnet, its pink satin strap tied
in a bow under my chin. I walk, a blue-eyed blond
amongst their ladders, with their voices like gardenias
floating in a pool.

The lemon pickers turn from their high rungs smile
at me, they whistle and click their tongues. Others
huddle around hesitant fires and gesture with open
hands offering me a toasted tortilla, a heated can
of frijoles or a piece of chocolate cake and I start
to join them.

Until, with a shake of his head, my father grabs
my hand, to end the cancion, to claim my difference.

PEI Robert Shipley

The Fence

Lindsay Friday

A fence surrounded the country club;
a thick, iron thing that ended in *fleur de lis* shapes

at the top. It was cold and majestic, much like the life that went on within its proud confines. The country club building itself was set far back from the fence, pedicured lawn sprawling yards and yards before reaching the boundary. There were horseshoe pits, and a pond with a fountain, and even a playground for the children of members. The playground was the feature closest to the fence, being maybe five or six yards away. A short jog's distance, three seconds running from the edge of the wood chips and you're there, the final barrier before the grass cuts off for the bike trail that winds by into the neighborhoods, affluence dropping the further it goes.

Little Sammy Evans didn't care much for the activities and the idle talk that went on inside the building. Those were adult things, he supposed. Why father liked to come here so often to talk to people, he didn't think he'd ever know. He preferred to sit in the swing set on the playground and ignore the other children, watching the life outside the country club fence. There was another playground a ways down the bike trail, he could see it really well over the shrubbery if he swung high enough. Sometimes he could hear the delighted shrieks of the other children playing, their laughter rolling over the field to mix with the music and chatter coming from the building behind him.

All sorts of people came by the bike trail. Sammy liked to watch them. There were the dog people, and the walking people, and the running people, and the biking people. Every now and then, there'd be the strolling teenagers or the young couple people. And then there were the children who passed along the trail to get to the Other Playground.

On a particular afternoon in August, there was a little girl and her father who came by the trail on the way to the park. Sammy sat swinging, watching them. The girl watched back. Sammy watched her tug her father's sleeve and say something to him, looking up to him expectantly.

Her father said something back; Sammy couldn't hear either of them well enough to make out words. They continued on their way. The little girl looked back at him once, her pigtails whipping about as she turned her head. Sammy watched her until she was a speck of blonde hair moving about the playground.

He would have sat on the swing all afternoon, but his older brother Wes came up with his friends and complained that Sammy had been on the swings all day, it was their turn, so he hopped off and wandered over to the fence. Grasping the fence posts in his hands, he put his face between the bars and peered at the Other Playground. It had been a while since the pigtail girl and her father had been by, and he'd seen three dog people and several runner people pass since then, so he'd lost track of her as she played. She hadn't left, at least not this way. He searched for her.

There, going down the slide. Sammy could see her father waiting to catch her with open arms, standing guard at the bottom of the chute. Her little blonde head bumped down and was snatched up into the air as soon as she made it to the end. Sammy heard her echoing giggles. Her father returned her to the ground, and she raced back up the ladder to the top of the slide. Sammy imagined he could hear her voice, "Do it again, do it again!"

Sammy glanced behind him to the country club and back to the other playground, then back again. In a fit of decisiveness, he turned on his heel and jogged past his brother, clearing the grasses and reaching the door to the dance hall-music room. That's where his parents would be. He reached a hand up to the knob and coaxed the French door open, careful lest his youth somehow tarnish its simple, functional elegance. His mother sat playing the piano at the far end of the room, so he shied up to his father. Several moments of adult banter passed over Sammy's head until the Evans patriarch took note of his son wavering beside him. He leaned forward from his seat on the bay window.

"Hey, Sammy," he smiled, teeth even and clean. Sammy scratched his arm.

"Hi. Dad?"

"Hmm?"

"Could I play on the Other Playground?"

His father looked confused. "The other playground?"

"Yeah, the one over that way," he pointed a little hand, "by the bike trail."

His father searched through the window, straightening up to see better. It took him a moment to realize which one his son was talking about.

"You'd better stay on club grounds," came his decision. Sammy's eyes flicked from the window to the floor to people his father had been visiting with earlier, all gone back to their own conversation.

"Why?"

"There are all sorts of people out there, and your mother and I won't be able to keep an eye on you there."

"Can I go if Wes comes with me?"

His father's eyes weren't cold or hard, but they were collected, used to the idea of influence. He met his son's retreating gaze and held it. "No."

Sammy blinked. "Okay." He slipped back outside.

Wes and his friends were still on the swings, so he trudged back to the fence, resuming his post between the iron bars. To his surprise when he looked down the trail to the Other Playground, Pigtail Girl and her father were coming back. He stayed rooted to the spot, too prideful to run away and hide in the bushes- she'd see. His fingers fidgeted around the metal spires as she came closer. She noticed him when she was about two yards away, and she changed direction sharply, towards him. Sammy felt his heart swell to stuff up his chest in something like panic, thumping in his throat and making him light-headed. He couldn't look away as she approached, her green eyes coming into focus as they fixated on him. Sammy recognized something in them: there was confidence in those eyes, like his father's, like his brother's. She stood before him with that smoldering softness, searching his face. He shrunk back almost imperceptibly.

"Hi!" she said, cheer permeating her voice. She didn't smile per se, but her face was friendly.

"Hi."

"My name's Emma. What's yours?"

"Sammy." Classic first-day-of-school routine. He felt strange running through it with a girl who just happened to walk by one afternoon. What was he supposed to do now? He didn't know what to expect.

Emma broke the script. "What are you doing in there?"

"In where?"

"In that fence." She pointed, tracing the perimeter as far as she could see. Sammy's eyes followed her finger before giving his answer.

"I'm playing." Her brow furrowed in consternation.

"You don't look like you're having much fun standing there." Sammy couldn't argue with her. He shrugged, kicked at some grass. Emma piped up again, "Can I play with you?"

Emma's father came over and laid a hand on his daughter's head. "We can't go in there, honey," he said. Emma looked up at him, her pigtails flipped and bounced from the motion.

"Why not?"

"That's the country club. It's members only."

As long as he'd been coming here, Sammy had never heard that before, and the thought disoriented him. There had always been the fence, but it had never occurred to him that the fence's job was to keep others out. He searched the Other Playground. No, there was no fence around it. His grasp on the bars tightened.

"Does that mean we aren't members," Emma was asking.

Her father smiled.

"Yeah, we aren't members. That's my smart little Emma."

"So that means they won't let us in...?" She was testing the waters of this strange rule, eyeing her father as if to gauge the truthfulness of his response- sometimes parents won't let you do things for stupid, nonsense reasons. Her father shook his head. Emma put her hands on her hips, racking her brain for a solution.

"You should come play with me, then," she told Sammy.

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm not supposed to leave."

Emma looked him in the eye, that confidence redoubled. Sammy was a little scared under it. "Then we'll play here."

They made a little game of passing sticks through the bars that developed into a castle siege, complete with spies. A slew of sticks made up the cast, the one with the most leaves was the king, and this one with berries was the queen. The sticks held up on the bars of the fence were the knights, and that was where most of the battles took place. Spy sticks fell onto the country club turf, storming the castle. Then somehow there was tag through the fence, running along its length and poking at each other through the slots. Exhilaration tore through their chests as high-pitched squeals and giggles.

They had maybe twenty minutes together, until the twilight swelled around them, turning the sky to orange and gold. Emma's father, who had been sitting under a nearby tree, stood up. "Emma, sweetie, we need to go home. Mama's waiting for us with dinner."

Emma stopped, letting Sammy stand before her, only this close to losing the game of tag.

"Okay," she said, obedient at the mention of food. She turned to Sammy. "I have to go." Sammy nodded, his heart returning to that packed-away place inside of him. Emma met her father on the sidewalk and they began their trek down the bike path. A biking person whizzed past them. Sammy followed a step behind on his side of the fence, searching for his voice.

"Do you come to that playground a lot, Emma?"

"Sometimes. Do you go to the fence-playground a lot?"

"Sometimes."

"Then I'll see you some time."

"Okay."

Emma smiled goodbye, taking her father's hand. Her pigtailed flopped once more as she let her gaze slide off of Sammy to look forward. Sammy continued to follow along the fence until it made a corner around the edge of the property. He stood at the junction. The bike trail wound on, taking Emma and her father with it. Sammy pressed himself against the fence, only just now feeling the separation of it.

Visiting the Sistine

M.J. Dolan

Struggling to keep the guide in sight,
I surged with my group
through a narrowing door. It was
like giving birth in reverse.

The entrance was disappointing, dark and dingy;
the walls echoed with the babble
of multi-linguaged guides competing to explain
in loud whispers, soft shouts.
Their words counterpointed
by the clicks and whirs
of legions of cameras erupting.

I leaned against the wall and stared up.
The noise faded and all distractions fled.
Eternally, Adam, naked, reaches out
while God the Father reaches
toward his son.

My mind reeled when I first looked down
and I was dizzy until
the flow of blood to my brain
resumed its usual course.

The Train Ride

Nancy L. Ross

When my grandson was 5 he had an imaginary friend named Joe who was a fireman.

Ryan carried on complete (but one sided) conversations with Joe. There was no doubt he was real to him.

One day I asked Ryan if he would like to take a train ride into Chicago and go to the Museum of Science and Industry. Along with fire trucks, trains fascinated him. He asked Joe if he wanted to go, then he answered me, "When?" We decided to go the next day.

We boarded the Chicago bound Burlington Northern commuter train at the Lisle, Illinois station. After we took our seats Ryan stood and looked around the car and was extremely interested in the seating available on the second floor. He could see people sitting up there through the railings that ran down both sides above our heads.

As the train moved toward the city we watched out the windows peering into the manicured backyards of the large Downers Grove homes and Western Springs mansions. Riding through LaGrange we saw its stately homes. Soon we saw Brookfield's modest brick houses before passing the Hollywood/Brookfield Zoo stop. After the forest preserve and Salt Creek we saw the large brick mansions and parks of Riverside. Berwyn came next with its little brick bungalows and Czech bakeries. Then after the three-flats and German restaurants of Berwyn rushed by we saw parking lots, junk piles of countless businesses, the rail container transfer yard, and lumber piles behind a home improvement store as we speeded through Cicero. Crossing Cicero Avenue into Chicago we watched apartments, the tenements of the ghetto, and the tall office buildings of the west loop go by. Finally we went through the rail switching yard before we entered the black above ground tunnel of Union Station.

When we exited at the station we walked down the long, dark, cold cement platform into the brightly lit terminal, across the marble hall to the taxi stand and got into the cab at the front of the line. As we

rode through the city toward the lakefront, Ryan excitedly took in the tall buildings, cars, buses, and people on the street. Traveling down Lake Shore Drive, he craned his neck to watch the sailboats on Lake Michigan and spotted a ship out in the distance.

The first thing we saw in the museum was the huge train display in the entrance hall. This is a display of scale trains with several separate tracks and different types of trains, all going around at the same time, in different directions, at different speeds. There are miniature train switching yards with cranes to lift the empty container cars. There are train stations and switching stations, fueling yards, coal yards, businesses, and lumber yards. The trains go over mountains, into cities, across rivers and gorges, and through prairies. Ryan excitedly ran from one vantage point to another for about 40 minutes.

We left the great hall and wandered through the corridors stopping to look at displays that interested him until we became hungry. Then we went down to the basement where there is a McDonald's. As we got to a table with our meals, Ryan sat at the end, I put down our tray and sat down-and Ryan yelled, "Gamma, you're sitting on Joe!" I jumped up. Surprised and embarrassed, I mumbled an apology to Joe, and sat down on the other side of the table. Meanwhile Ryan was explaining to Joe that I didn't know any better.

When we arrived at the station for our return trip home, Ryan asked if he could sit in a seat on the second floor. I decided he would be safe by himself, since I could see the seats and he couldn't come down the steps without my seeing him walking down the aisle. After we passed the Downers Grove station, I stood and called to Ryan that he should come downstairs because we would get off at the next station. He said, "OK, Gamma." Then he leaned across the rail, looking toward the other side, and yelled, "Joe, we get off at the next station." I noticed several people watching him, and as he called out they all looked to the other side of the car to see who Joe was.

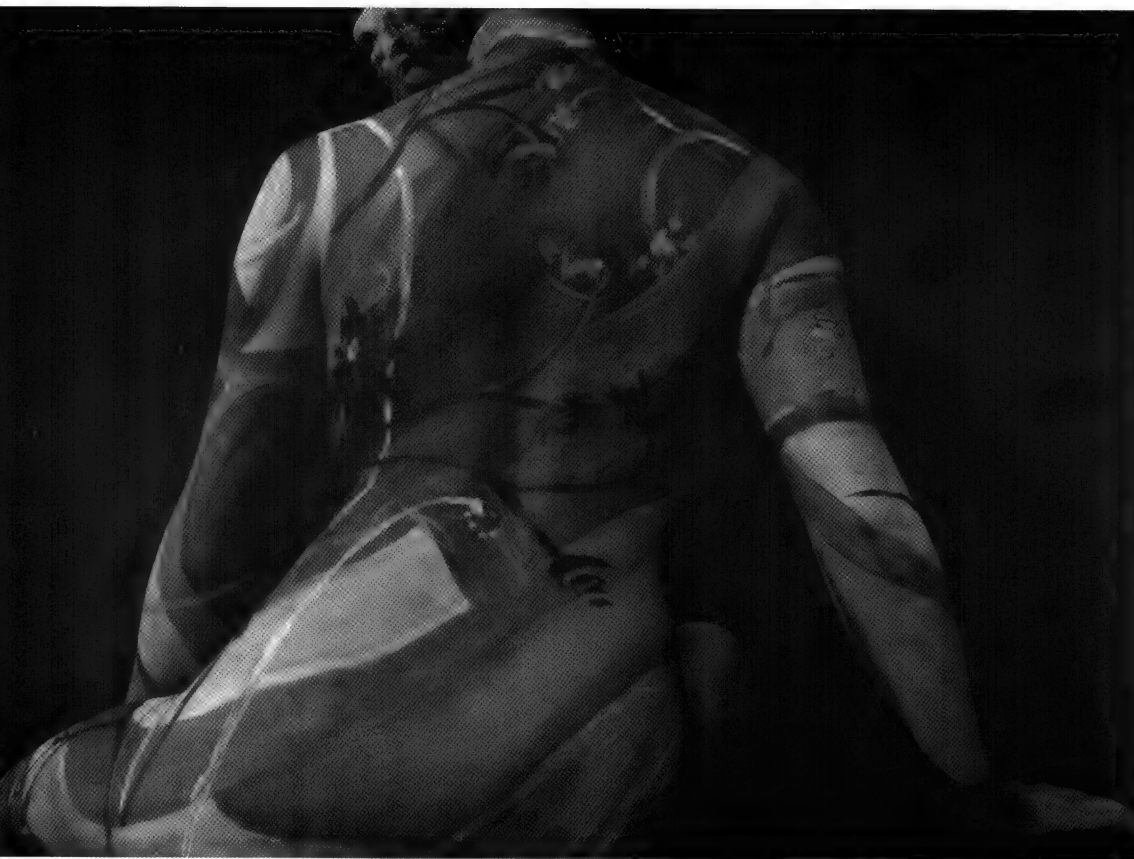


ENTRY 5 Kendall Marie Rogers

Half an Inch

Kaitlin FitzRandolph

I love new shampoo days.
It's one of those things,
like a single fresh flower in a glass
or getting a real letter in the mail-
things that bring a surprising sense of happiness
with pure simplicity.
I bring my new shampoo home
with its fresh scent, perfect shiny label
and set it in my shower.
Then I realize I have lined it up
with an entire row of old shampoo bottles,
the ones with half an inch left-
half an inch of a scent so familiar
my brain doesn't recognize its beauty anymore.
Old bottles whose unique label designs
now seem uninspired,
who have withered with neglect to that
perfect point of comfortable nostalgia.
They sit there glaring at me every day
as I reach for my new shampoo.
I loathe them.
Yet I can't bring myself to throw them away,
no matter how desperately I want to.
So I am left with a confusing cluster of old and new,
memories of the past-
a half an inch of guilt.



KAT BLACK Arielle Wilcott

Ophelia's A Fault of Madness

Melissa Dang

Do not weep over my vacant shell,
You selfishly mad, incorrigible man.
I merely did what trepidation withheld you from
And wouldn't you like to know why.

It was not for you, damned soul, delaying fool,
Traitorous sly slithering excuse of a lover.
Let's all weep for poor Hamlet,
Who has lost sanity, but not his lusty inhibitions.

I've drowned my fury in cool waters,
Settling the resentment that threatened me.
Clever aren't I? To only sleep myself away
Instead of taking everyone with me?

Fickle, vapid, supposed-noble Hamlet
Why did you deny me your secrets?
Now we are lost, Heaven can't save me
Hell has labeled me his concubine.

I cannot sleep nor dream, because I've chanced sleep
My soul is restless with bestowed madness.
Filled with the disguised acrid memoir
Of promises you forged and failed.

Poor, proud boy who was not a man
Didn't you know I was gone from you?
The moment the rushing current filled my ears
I died with only the sound of my heartbeat.

Visiting the Queen

Doris Yanger

Recently, a cat who has faithfully greeted me each morning no longer comes to my door. I am hoping it is only a temporary absence...She manages to make these mystery disappearances about once a year. I often wonder where she goes, however, she always returns in a few days. Nothing appeared any different that day in December as I watched "Calli" quietly walk into the sunset after having her evening meal, as she always does, outside, on the deck. She is feral, and refuses to cross the threshold into the house, and instinctively fears being indoors. For nine years I have tried to bait her with food, using every trick in my bag of bribery and reward techniques, but she

has remained determined to be a free agent...I have no desire to torture the animal by forcing her to remain in the house against her will.

However, this does create complications on the deck at feeding time. An aggressive, and handsome young male feral showed up for dinner about eight years ago, and shared the groaning board, and guarded his harem of Calli and her three kittens. He enjoyed the companionship of the three "altered" ladies for many years, patiently waiting in vain for them to become aroused by his impressive appearance. Calli mourned his passing, last year, when he was killed by a car. Eventually a band of opossums joined the dining table and I found the menagerie of refugees from the lost wilderness an added source of joy



CHIAROSCURO Sabrina Mendoza

and entertainment. My little family of feral friends lived together in harmony and gratitude for the tasty handouts. Ever since the passing of her handsome orange consort "Red" last year, I was able to become closer to Calli. She now eagerly jumped into my lap for treats and stroking, (as long as it was out of doors.) Summer and winter, we would sit in the sun together for a spell each day, and both Calli and her daughter "Jetta" would compete for attention and grooming.

There always remains that unsolved mystery of where Calli goes when she disappears for a few days without any signs or clues ... she just walks away. A few days later she reappears, in fine condition, and resumes her life as the lady of leisure, sunning under the dappled light of the backyard shrubs. Her casual demeanor does little to dispel the anxieties I develop with each passing day that she is gone. I would love to be able to conceal a camera on a collar, and follow her every movement when she leaves on one of these secret journeys. However, when I was a child, I had a cat that wore a collar, and died of strangulation when the collar got caught in a branch of a tree. I have fears about becoming too curious about tracking my wandering cat if she is encumbered by wearing a collar.

I have heard that this pattern of behavior was not too unusual for cats ... the Old Mother Goose nursery rhyme states that the cat was asked "Pussy cat, pussy cat where have you been?" Of course everyone knows that the valiant feline was in London protecting Queen Elizabeth I from a mouse. It was known at that time that the queen was terrified by mice. So, can we all assume that our missing cats are doing some valiant deed, while they are on sabbatical?"

Or, more realistically, was she locked in the neighbor's garage? Or in their pickup truck? Maybe she dined too well down at the community club house dumpster and was recovering from a tummy ache somewhere? Other possibilities? There are a few mean folks

No Poem Today

Mary Baumgartner

My heart is in dismay.
My mind has started wondering.
There will be no poem today.

My emotions will not sway.
My feelings are still missing.
There will be no poem today.

The birds that sing won't come my way.
The stars have stopped their sparkling.
There will be no poem today.

The Sun is quickly moving far away.
The Moon is slowly disappearing.
There will be no poem today.

The day and night suspended in time will stay.
The darkness makes me feel like dying.
There will be no poem today.

who do try to poison the many ferals, deemed nuisances. Sometimes warnings are posted that alert residents of wild animal sightings, advising that all pets be brought in at night. Often bobcats, foxes, owls, hawks, coyotes and even cougars are seen in the area. Sadly, the signs are also posted offering rewards for information about missing pets that never return.

I have seen a favorite young cat of mine, "Flicka" disappear one night after being permitted to go out for an evening stroll. Since that time I insist that all my cats come in every night. They grumble a bit, and settle on the pillows of my bed, and make the best of the situation until morning.

Today, I worry...and even grieve... my beloved calico feral friend for nine faithful years is missing. It has been ten days now since "Calli" came calling for her meals. Every morning, winter or summer she would be at my door, dancing with joy, performing an excited little pirouette dance while I performed my part of our ritual, putting down her bowl of food, then stroking her lovingly, to which she responded with gusto... and only then would she eat.

Over the years Calli won my respect. And I now miss her fiercely. I decided to write about my little friend ... and how she had shown up, quite young and pregnant all those years ago. I would describe how she brought her little kittens to us from their secret hiding place, after three months of only guessing that the big chunks of food that she trotted off with were for her babies. I thought of my amazement when she would leap on the back of a neighbor's dog and ride him out of yard to protect her little ones.

I would honor her memory with descriptions of all the gestures and traits that made her so memorable ... but on the 14th day of her absence, she returned ... I received no clue about where she had been, and life resumed its usual pace ... I suspect that she had been to London to see the queen.



SNORRI Sabrina Mendoza

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Editor: R. Scott Yarbrough

Student Editor: Melissa Dang

Music Editor: Barbe McMillen

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